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Issue No. 11 – £10 / €14 / $22

The Power of Youth

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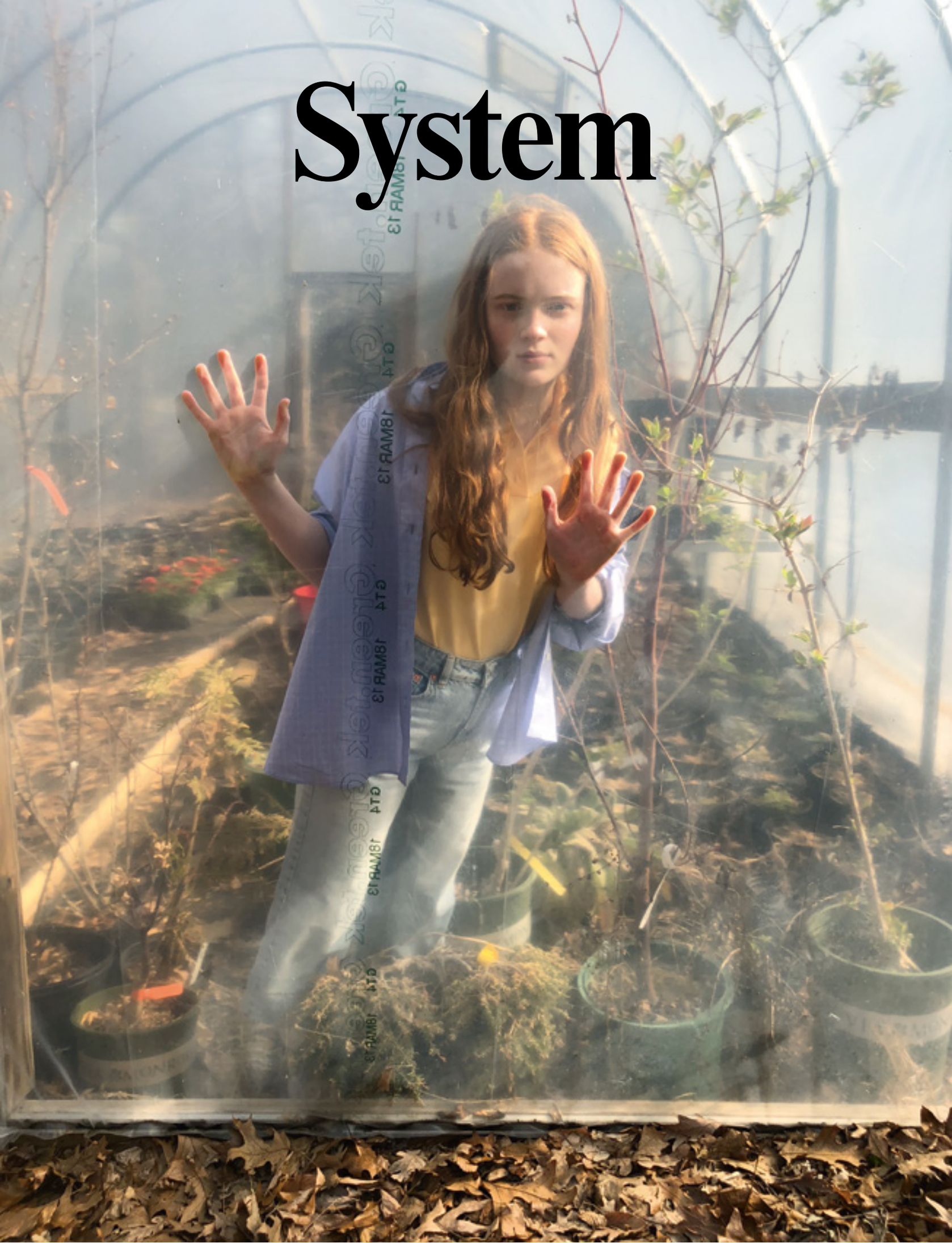

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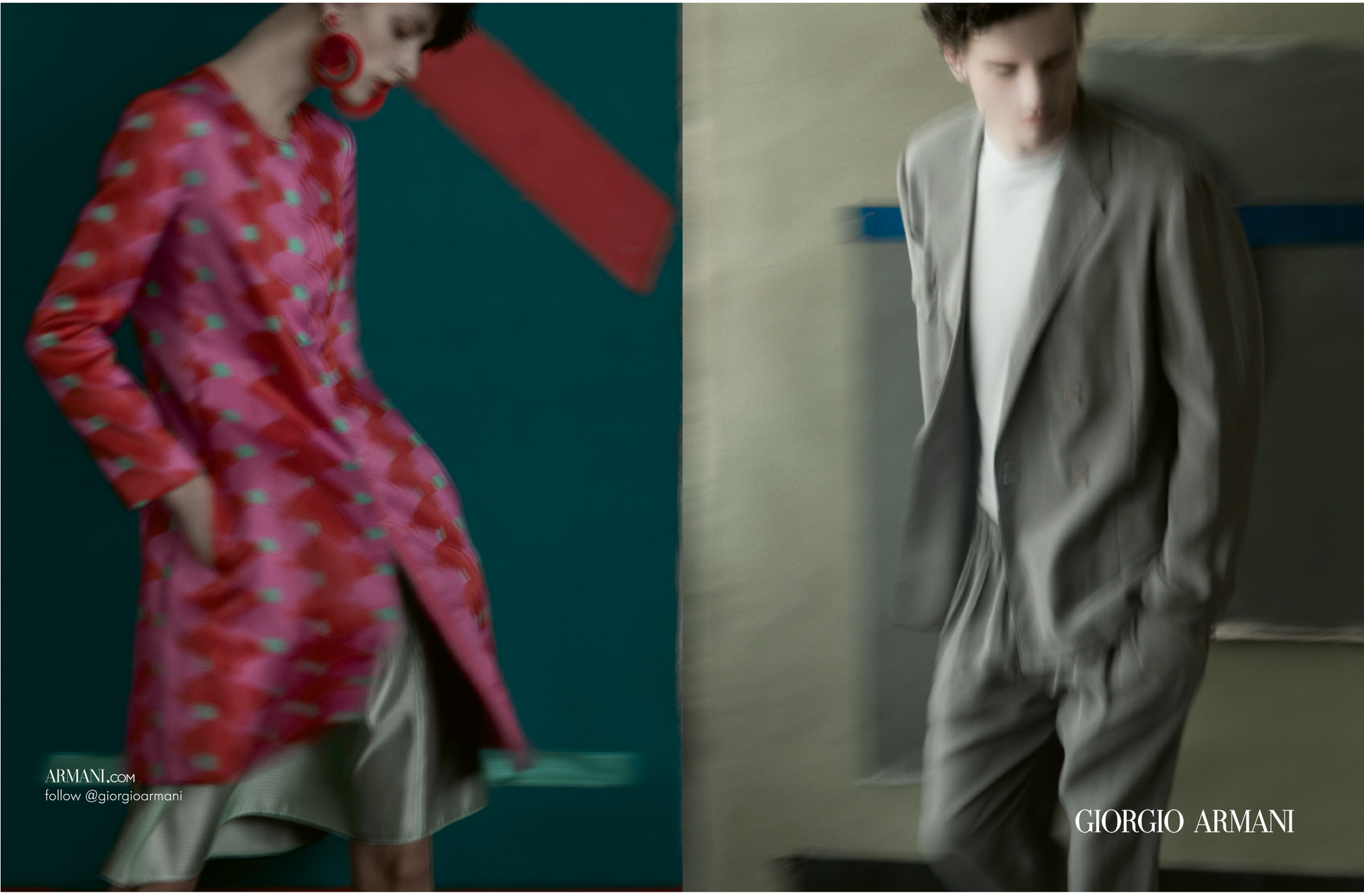
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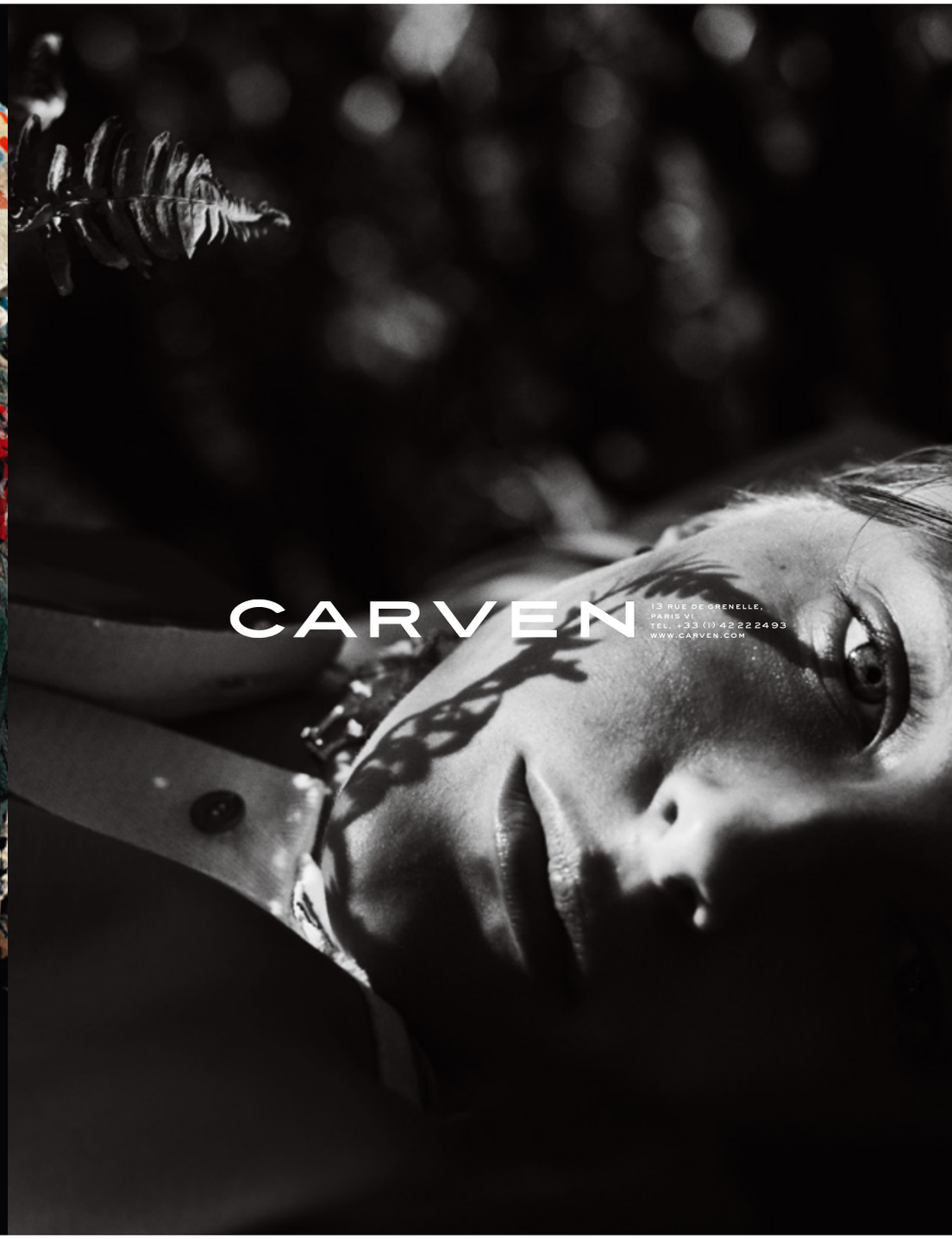
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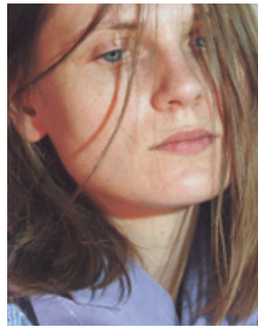

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Contributors

Agnès B. is a French fashion designer. 'Une tartine de beurre' is her guilty pleasure.

Camille Bidault-Waddington is a Paris-based stylist. Her guilty pleasure is to not have any: 'I feel guilt, I love pleasure, I cannot connect both.'

Tim Blanks is a fashion critic and editor-at-large of *The Business of Fashion*. Recently, the top shelf of his bookcase collapsed and took everything underneath with it. 'If someone had died (i.e. me),' he explains, 'the books would have been guilty (the carpentry was solid enough), which would have made them my guiltiest pleasure. Giving life, yes, but taking it, too!'

Alix Browne is a writer and the editor-in-residence at Helmut Lang. Her guilty pleasure is horses although, she says, 'the pleasure of riding every weekend ultimately outweighs any guilt over the extravagance of being a two-horse family'.

Grace Coddington is the creative director at large at US *Vogue*. Her guilty pleasure is the TV series *Nashville*.

Jean-Philippe Delhomme is a Paris-based fashion illustrator, painter and writer. Red wine at lunch is his guilty pleasure, although 'not every day!'

Lena C. Emery is a German photographer who lives and works in London. Turning her phone off for the day is Lena's guilty pleasure.

Laia Garcia is a writer and the deputy editor at *No Man's Land*. 'I try to not feel guilty about things that bring me joy,' she says, 'but it's Burger King. Definitely Burger King.'

Craig Green is a British fashion designer specializing in menswear. 'Going to the cinema on my own in the middle of the day' is Craig's guilty pleasure. 'I am a big fan of horror, all kinds of disaster end-of-the-world films. Zombie movies are usually at the top of the list.'

Alexander Fury is a fashion critic and the editor of *AnOther* magazine. 'My guilty pleasure is Janice Dickinson's autobiography: *No Lifeguard On Duty: The Accidental Life of the World's First Supermodel*.'

Jamie Hawkesworth is a London-based photographer. 'Dancing to "Call Your Girlfriend" by Robyn in the darkroom' is his guiltiest pleasure.

James Hyman is the founder of the Hyman Archive, the largest collection of magazines in the world. His guilty pleasure is: 'Collecting, reading and browsing online and offline in places like the Notting Hill Book & Comic Exchange and Music & Video Exchange.'

Dominique Issermann is a French photographer. Chocolate is her guilty pleasure, which she says is 'not too dangerous because there is no punishment for abusive use, except for a big fat ass'.

Kim Jones is the artistic director of Dior Homme. His guilty pleasure is the hotel and resort chain Aman.

Brigitte Lacombe is a French photographer and documentary filmmaker, based in New York. Her guilty pleasure is to stay in bed all day when returning home from her constant travels, 'reading, watching films, sleeping, playing with StudioCat… sometimes more than one day!'

Feng Li is a photographer based in Chengdu. 'At times I can be lazy,' he says of his guilty pleasure. 'I truly enjoy that.'

Ronnie Cooke Newhouse is the owner and creative director of House + Holme. She has no guilt.

Hans Ulrich Obrist is a Swiss curator and artistic director at the Serpentine Galleries. His guilty pleasure is buying a book every day.

Max Pearmain is a stylist and contributing editor at *Arena Homme +*. Bad restaurant reviews are his guilty pleasure: 'I just Google them sometimes and rejoice in their awfulness.'

Loïc Prigent is a writer and documentary filmmaker from Paris. His guilty pleasure is strawberry cakes.

Vanessa Reid is a freelance stylist based in Paris. Don Julio tequila is her guilty pleasure.

Nobert Schoerner is a German photographer and filmmaker, based in London. Singing Hall and Oates at karaoke is Norbert's guilty pleasure. 'Manic moves and drowsy dreams… or living in the middle between the two extremes…'

Raven Smith is a London-based freelance creative director. His guiltiest pleasure is singing at the top of his lungs.

Guy Trebay is a culture and style reporter and menswear critic for the *New York Times*. 'The only reason to feel guilty about pleasure,' he says, 'is if you postpone having it.'

Lotta Volkova is a stylist, currently working at Balenciaga and Vetements. Her guilty pleasure is shopping.

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Youth has the power, Barack Obama recently wrote in *Time* magazine, 'to see the world anew; to reject the old constraints, outdated conventions and cowardice too often dressed up as wisdom'. Words that seem to reflect much of what is currently driving the fashion industry. In the six months since *System*'s last issue, it feels like fashion's constraints, conventions and cowardice have been challenged. Preparing the foundations for a new era, as exemplified by our Gen-Z cover star Sadie Sink. But historically speaking, generational change is often a bumpy and uncertain ride, and right now seems no exception. With this in mind, we set out to explore the idea of passing the baton – wilfully or otherwise – in this issue.

Firstly, incoming Dior Homme artistic director Kim Jones met with Undercover mastermind Jun Takahashi in Tokyo. In their conversation, Jones mentions the excitement of discovering the world of Undercover while working in a streetwear warehouse as a student. Takahashi then spoke with Nobu Kitamura, his spiritual 'elder brother' and the founder of one of Japan's original streetwear brands Hysteric Glamour. Nobu arrived with a photo from a 1988 party for his label: in the background, a teenage Jun in a Hysteric Glamour T-shirt on the night the fashion bug bit. Proof that inspiration can pass between generations – Nobu to Jun to Kim – and just how important it is for established designers to send the elevator from the ivory tower back down to the ground floor.

Another long-time influence on Jun, Vivienne Westwood has, unsurprisingly, a less orthodox passing-the-baton story. In Alexander Fury's tender and revealing feature, Westwood and her husband Andreas Kronthaler openly discuss how their 30-year love story has blossomed into something new, inevitable, and perhaps, taboo: a business succession plan for, as Westwood deadpans, 'when I die'.

On the other side of the world, Anna Wintour's Condé Nast environment in New York has stereotypically been depicted as one of corporate elitism and fear. Phillip Picardi, the 26-year-old behind Them, Condé Nast's new LGBTQ platform, paints an altogether different picture: one with Wintour enthusiastically championing new media voices culturally light years from her own long reign as *Vogue*'s be-shaded 'editrix'.

Meanwhile, much has been said of late about the questionable practices in the making of fashion imagery. But beyond the obvious, necessary shifts in conduct, we've been asking ourselves a logical if uneasy next question: 'What's the future for nudity and sexualized imagery in fashion?' Sixty young designers, photographers, stylists, models and others rapidly becoming fashion's new establishment shared their thoughts.

And finally, to this issue's cover star, *Stranger Things'* Sadie Sink. Conspicuously not an established fashion designer nor an authority on where the industry's going: simply a talented, just-turned 16-year-old actress, experiencing the realities of entering a new age while navigating the turbulence of public exposure. Fragile, yet powerful – the embodiment of these, our stranger times.

‘You don’t have to be an adult to be a role model.’

***Stranger Things* star Sadie Sink turns 16.**

By Laia Garcia
Photographs by Juergen Teller
Styling by Angelo DeSanto

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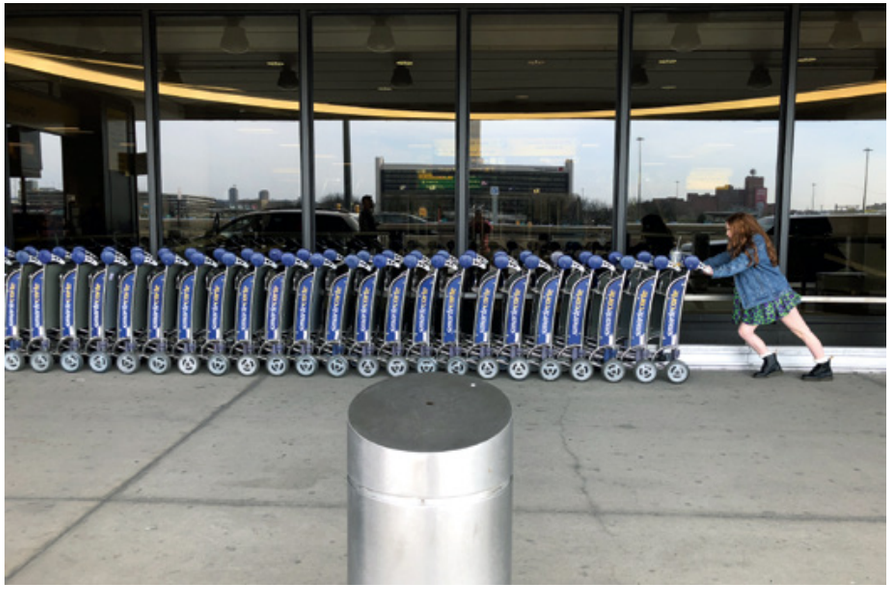


This page and previous pages: dress and socks by Miu Miu
Jacket and shoes, Sadie's own

Left: Shirt, socks and cardigan by Miu Miu
Jeans and shoes, Sadie's own

This page: Dress, cardigan and socks by Miu Miu
Shoes, Sadie's own

Sweater and socks by Miu Miu,
Jeans and shoes, Sadie's own

Previous pages: Shirt and polo by Miu Miu
Jeans, Sadie's own

This page: Jacey Sink wears own clothes
Cardigan and shorts by Miu Miu

Following pages, right: Mitchell Sink wears Miu Miu
denim shirt and own clothing

This page: Sweater by Miu Miu

Opposite page: Jacket and socks by Miu Miu
Shoes, Sadie's own.

Photographer's assistant: Karin Xiao. Production: Tessa Maxwell at The Production Factory. Jesse Katches, Jason Avery.
Make-up: Bo using Chanel Palette Essentielle. Hair: Bo using R+Co. Manicurist: Jing Kim at See Management.

While we were distracted about what all the millennials were doing or not doing, buying or not buying, and all the ways in which they were purportedly signaling the end of civilization as we know it, Generation Z was born and are now the teenagers leading us into the 21st century: the ones who are making the news and, just like the fashion industry post-#MeToo, finding their way in this world.

Talking to Sadie Sink, the just-turned 16-year-old actress who shot to fame in the second season of the Netflix TV show *Stranger Things*, you get a sense of what makes this new generation tick. To fashion folks late to the show, perhaps the first time they took note of Sadie Sink was in Miu Miu's *Whispers* campaign in December 2017, or when she opened Undercover's runway show, *We Are Infinite*, in March this year. With her cultural relevance now cemented, it's easy to forget that Sink has only been so prominent, and making serious waves alongside her peers, for less than a year.

With all this in mind, Juergen Teller hopped on a plane to spend a day with Sadie Sink, being greeted by her at Newark airport, before photographing her in Miu Miu's hot-off-the-catwalk Autumn-Winter 2018-19 collection around her New Jersey neighbourhood – together with siblings Jacey and Mitchell, and their chihuahua terrier, Kiko. We then asked New York writer Laia Garcia to speak with Sadie about this moment in time. From navigating the reality of becoming one of the most recognizable faces in popular culture right now, to the personal milestone of having turned 16 two days before – here are the thoughts of a young woman finding her way in the world's stranger times.

Laia Garcia: Hi Sadie. So first of all, happy birthday, I know your birthday was two days ago.
Thank you, it was. I'm 16 now!

Wow! What did you do for your birthday?
I never really make a big deal out of my birthday. I am not really fond of parties and celebrations like that; I mean I did when I was little, but now I would rather just have dinner with my friends and family rather than a big flashy party. I guess I don't like people to make a big deal. Of course, I say that, but if people didn't wish me a happy birthday I would probably be upset!

Did you buy yourself a special birthday present?
You know, I didn't this year, but maybe I will start doing that. People like my grandma are still asking me what I want for my birthday and I don't really know, so now she has decided I am a difficult person to buy presents for. I would much rather they donate to a charity than give me anything because I don't really know what I want.

Have you ever bought yourself anything to commemorate any major achievement in your life, like when you got cast on *Stranger Things*? Did you treat yourself to anything then?
I don't think I did, I am trying to think. If I want something I will buy it, but I am not the person who is just going to buy something for the heck of it, you know?

Since we're on shopping, what was the last thing you bought that you really wanted?
That's a good one. Oh, I suppose I could consider this a birthday present to myself: I got myself one of those stationary Peloton bikes. That was the last thing I bought.

Are you very athletic, do you enjoy working out and exercising and stuff?
Yes, I really like to work out, but I wouldn't necessarily say I am coordinated sports wise. I can't do baseball or anything like that. My older brothers are very sporty and are very into football; they each have their own sport.

How did you approach skateboarding then? Did you took classes to prepare for the *Stranger Things* role? I would be so nervous about getting hurt.
I was really afraid to fall at first, but now it is less of a problem, when you skateboard you kind of have to be fearless; you won't learn if you don't attempt the tricks. You will trial these tricks and you probably will fall. At first I was afraid to try tricks because I knew I was going to fall, but my instructor was like, 'Sadie, you have to do it, you are not going to learn if you don't try'. So I did and I wiped out, but I did learn in the end, so it's OK. The first time I fell it was really embarrassing. I was skating up a hill in my neighbourhood and it was my first lesson. There was a neighbour outside her house and she watched me fall flat on my face. It hurt really bad, but I didn't want to cry or anything like that. It hurt so bad, so I was a bit afraid of falling but I got over it.

So you've had a crazy last two years. How did you mentally prepare yourself for *Stranger Things*? Knowing you were entering something that would take you to another level?
There is really no way to prepare yourself; I had no idea what it was going to be like. I knew that *Stranger Things* had a lot of different worlds that I hadn't experienced before, but because I had never experienced it I didn't know how to prepare for it. I just threw myself into it. The main focus was the acting for me. It seems different now. I can't recognize myself.

Were you nervous?
Not really, I was more excited. There was a lot of speculation going around about my character, Max: who was this new girl; what is she doing; I don't know if I like this. I was just ready to bring Max out; I wanted to learn about me as a person. Once it came out, it was like a relief. It was really nice when it came out.

When you feel like you want to stop being famous Sadie from *Stranger Things* and just be regular Sadie, what do you do?
For me, I am always regular Sadie, wherever I am; I feel more regular Sadie than *Stranger Things* Sadie. In my home town, with my friends, nobody really treats me differently. I have the same group of friends I have had for the past four years, so before any of this. They don't change around me; they are the same people and treat me like the same Sadie, so I guess when it gets overwhelming, I just go to them.

You are involved in fashion, too. I was wondering what your first experience was with fashion? What first drew your interest?
I have always had an interest in fashion and when I was little I dreamed of becoming a fashion designer. And I would always be sketching dresses and stuff like that. But you know, before *Stranger Things*, I was never given the opportunity to wear or experience any of the brands that I am able to wear now, those higher-end brands that I can wear on red carpets and in photo shoots. I guess the first experience I had with fashion, when I realized there was more to it, was when I did my first fashion shoot. I remember the stylist brought out all these beautiful dresses by brands I had never even heard of and I was like, wow, there are a lot more brands out there than I thought.

Who was your favourite designer or brand when you were a kid? Who did you look up to?
I didn't really know any other fashion designers, apart from the smaller brands I was wearing. I guess that was when I was like 10. What was my favourite brand? I want to say something really extravagant like Prada or Chanel, because they are really big and I considered them untouchable.

Tell me about your relationship with your stylist. You met her at your first shoot and then kept working with her?
Well, Molly [Dickson] never puts me in anything I don't feel comfortable in, you know; she is very open to discussing my style and very big on being true to my style. You know, there are a lot of people who will just put me in clothes and say, 'Yes that is what you are wearing, now go'. You don't really get your say and that scares me. But with Molly, she never pushes anything or makes me wear any particular brands. She asks me, 'Do you like this? Is this you? Is this your style?' And whatever I say, she is OK, and that's the main reason we really clicked.

You mentioned brands like Prada and Chanel being untouchable. How does it feel now you have access to this world?
It is different, I have a different relationship to these brands. I can touch them, experience and actually wear them now, so they are not so untouchable. I now realize there is more to fashion than things having to match: you can mix things up; you can mix different styles together; you can go crazy… Whatever you feel comfortable in is what works, basically.

Is that how you define your personal style? Comfort?
Comfort is key for me, yes, but also, I wouldn't really limit myself to one specific style. I like to try all sorts of stuff: I can be edgy sometimes; I can be cute and girlie sometimes; I can be chic. Whatever I am feeling that day. Which is what's so great about fashion – you are given the opportunity to trial these different styles. I am not very particular about what styles I like; I am willing to try anything, as long as the clothes make me feel happy. You can mix a girlie top with some edgy boots, stuff like that, you can mix it up.

'I think our generation has seen the change that needs to be made for our future, and that is why our generation is so powerful.'

'It is trendy now for people to care about things, to be 'woke'. But then there are brands that are doing that, too. It's sometimes hard to tell the difference.'

So you are vegan now, but when you did you first decide to go vegetarian?
I have been vegan for two years, and it doesn't seem like a long time for me. I was vegetarian for a year before that. I decided to go vegetarian when I was at this restaurant with my friend; there was this buffet area and this whole roasted pig, and you could see everything. It was so gross. I was super grossed out by it and I realized that that was bacon, ham, pork, the stuff I was eating on a daily basis, but now I was seeing the whole animal and I was totally grossed out. So I questioned bacon and other meat like that. That was when I made the connection, that meat was actual animals and what I was actually putting in my body. That was when I decided to cut out meat. I think a lot of people think that way, too. In America, eating meat is so normal, and people are blinded by what they are eating. But when you can all of a sudden see the animal you are eating, people get grossed out. So that was what convinced me to become vegetarian.

How did your family take it?
I grew up in Texas, where it's all about barbecues. All my family ate meat, it was the normal thing, and I was blinded by that and thought eating meat was normal. I tried to go vegetarian earlier – I was 11 or 12 – and I did for a week, but then we had some family visit and they noticed I wasn't eating meat and they were like, 'Hey, you're not going vegetarian on us, are you?' And I was like, 'Oh shoot, am I weird now?' So I quit, like, 'This is weird! I have to eat meat!' That was what prevented me from going vegetarian a bit earlier, but now veganism, and being vegetarian has become a very big topic and I think people are starting to understand it a little bit more. My family is totally 100-percent supportive of it. At first, they didn't understand, but now they are really supportive and I think one of my brothers is vegetarian because of it, and my mum went vegan for a while. It is just nice to know I am inspiring others.

And then you went vegan after you were in *The Glass Castle* with Woody Harrelson?
When I was vegetarian but not vegan, my friends didn't think it was too weird. But then one of my friends said, 'You better not go vegan on us!' I was like, 'Vegan, no way, of course not, no way never'. Then a year later I did the movie with Woody Harrelson and there were actually three people on set who were vegan. I was surrounded by this new lifestyle and I was in this different place; I got this new perspective on what veganism actually is. It inspired me and I realized that veganism had been this weird thing, but it's not the case any more. I watched documentaries, and I realized that it's not just the meat industry hurting animals, it is also egg and dairy, and there are a lot of animal products that go into the foods you are eating that you don't even realize. So I made the switch, and it was easy because I had already given up meat. I mean, it takes a while to get into it, and I always say if you are thinking about eating less meat and going vegan, going cold turkey is pretty hard. It works for some people, but I understand that not everyone can do it, especially in other countries where you have to eat meat to survive. But in America, we are given the choice, the opportunity, we get to choose what we eat a lot of the time. We have all these different options and resources. So yeah, if you can choose to eliminate meat, then go for it, but maybe just start with one day a week with no meat and then gradually increase these days as time goes on. It is all just what is right for your body.

Do you feel it's also about how the meat industry affects the environment?
At first, I went vegetarian and then vegan solely because of the animals. That is kind of the most obvious reason for me. People do it for health, a lot for the animals, but as you say, the environment is also another thing that is helped when you go vegan. A lot of people don't know that and I didn't either until I watched a documentary about it and then I was like, 'Woah, now I'm even prouder to be a vegan!' You know, a lot of people say to me, 'Hey, you're just one person, how much can you really be doing? How much can one person do just by going vegan?' That upsets me because I have been told that a lot, like you are not helping anybody, and I am like, 'No, I am'. I am inspiring others; I inspired my mum and my brother and a lot of my friends, and the more people you inspire the more change you make. And as far as the environment goes, people say, 'I'm just one person, what can I do? Shorten my shower? Carpooling, recycling? How can these things do anything?' But if everyone thinks that way, then nobody is going to get anywhere, and no change will be made.

'Kids think their role models have to be older, but I look up to my little sister because she sees the world with a fresh perspective, without any judgement.'

Older generations are always saying, 'Oh, you millennials and Gen-Z kids are selfish and only think about yourselves', but when you do something for yourself and it influences other people, then it becomes powerful, because other people see themselves reflected in you. That is why activist young people these days are making a big difference in a way they weren't 30 years ago.
I think our generation has seen the change that needs to be made for our future; we see the change that needs to be made and that is why our generation is so powerful. They use their voices and take stands for what they believe in because they are passionate about the changes they want to see for the future.

Are you excited to vote though?
Yeah! I am really excited. When you are younger you have all these views and beliefs and you are very passionate about things, but when you can vote, you can have more power, too. So yes, I am very excited about that.

I remember the first time I voted; it was so exciting. I did it early in the morning. Everyone is there and you feel like you are part of the community of the world.
That makes me think again about the one-person-what-can-I-do thing, you can apply that to voting. I've seen people say that about voting, like, why should I vote, I'm just one person. But again, if everyone thinks like that you are not going to get anywhere, you have to do your part.

How has your concept of fame changed since like you started acting? People sometimes think that being famous and being successful are the same thing. What is your take?
The thing about being successful meaning you're famous, I don't think that is true. I personally feel like I am successful in other areas of life that don't have anything to do with acting. I am a big sister; I am a daughter; I am a friend; I am more than just an actor. I have success in other areas of my life. I guess it is easy to make that connection between the two and think they are the same thing. Like, she has millions of followers on Instagram, she is successful. You could have 20 million followers on Instagram and lots of projects lined up, but if you're not happy… Sure, you can have a successful career and that is great and will make people happy, but you need to find happiness and success in other areas of your life that don't have to do with work. Does that make sense?

Doing a job that is also your passion is a privilege. I don't think a lot of people realize that.
Exactly. A lot of people are like: 'Oh, I need money to be successful in life or to be happy in life; if I have a lot of money, I will be happy and successful.' But again you can be making a whole lot of money, but if you are not happy with what you are doing and if you are not passionate about your work, you are not going to put that effort into it or be content with your life.

You are not on Instagram as much as other people your age…
I have a very different relationship with social media than other girls my age. Before I had a big following on social media, I would be on the app a lot even if I have never been that active with posts. I might post occasionally, not every single second in my day; I am a lot more private. I am all about being in the moment and experiencing things with your own eyes and not through the camera lens and having to take pictures of everything. Once I started to get a following on Instagram, it was great because it was like, wow, there are so many people who love the show and these fans are incredible. But it also opens the door to a lot of negativity and that can really mess with your head. So that's why I avoid being on it a lot. I still have it and will post things that I want to share with my fans and I will comment on pictures, but I am not the kind of person who is just constantly scrolling through their feed, because then you get into this whole negativity and all this drama. I think for my mental clarity that I need to limit the negativity in my life. And I can be happy and productive if my head is clear. There is nothing worse than going to dinner with your friends or your family and you're trying to make conversation and everyone's head is just buried in their phones and you are just looking around. It happened to me once and all of my friends were like buried in their phones and I just looked around and I was like, 'Wow, is this really what it has come to?' I can't even talk to my friends! It is important to take a break and step back. It is not just because of all of the followers and all the stuff like that, that I have this view on social media. I have always been like this. When I was 12, I lost my

'Sure, you could have 20 million followers on Instagram, a successful career and lots of projects lined up, but if you're not happy...'

phone on a plane, and then I didn't get a new one until I was like 13, not because my parents were mad at me for losing it, I just never got around to renewing it. I am fine without a phone. I lose my phone all my time; I let my batterie die. I like being without my phone; I think it is great to just be in the moment and really enjoy life through your own eyes and not your screen.

It's funny I didn't have a cell phone growing up, but now I am totally that person who can't be without it. I do take social media breaks every so often, and they have been truly great.
When I get onto social media, I get on it with a purpose: to talk to my friends who I haven't talked to in a while or to fans and see the artwork they have been making. Seeing all these fans from all over the world is incredible. That is the good side to social media, but then there are all the downsides, so it important to find the balance.

What is your relationship with the Internet then? I get up and the first thing I do is check all my social media and I just try and imagine what life would be without that…
There are so many little moments in life I think you miss because you are looking at your phone and I think that people just need to realize that. I remember being on my phone once, and my little sister was like, 'Sadie, Sadie, let's go play, let's do something fun'. I was on my phone and I was like, 'Yeah, OK, in one second'. Then I thought, 'Hold on, what am I doing?' My little sister doesn't own a phone; she is not glued to a screen like a lot of us are. And she has this like fresh perspective on everything. And I thought: 'Yes, I am going to go outside with my sister and play and enjoy this beautiful day.' So it is those kinds of moments that you miss when you are on your phone. That is why I put my phone down and go for days without it. It is refreshing to me. It is very important.

Do you keep a journal or make art?
I had like a journal when I was younger, but now I will jot down notes every once in a while. I am not an artist, I cannot draw. Let's get this straight right now. I get asked that all the time.

Maybe you could do abstract stuff.
I sort of scribble on everything when I am bored. There will be moments in the day when I think of a thought and I will write that down or my sister will say something hilarious and I will write that down because I want to remember it forever.

What was the last book you read?
I usually don't read these types of books, but I just read Tina Fey's *Bossypants*, and it is so good. I was laughing so hard; it is really funny. My favourites are *The Great Gatsby*, *Of Mice and Men*, and I started reading *To Kill a Mockingbird,* which is really good. I have read Shakespeare before, but I'm not going to lie, I got help from the Internet to translate a lot of the stuff though. Because honestly who can read Shakespeare? I can't, I don't know who can. I need a person who can read Shakespeare and translate it well. When I was younger I tried to read all these books, but I didn't understand what they are saying. Now it takes me a while depending on what kind of book I am reading, the language they are using. So, for Shakespeare, I have read *Julius Caesar* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, but yes it is hard. I kind of like classic books, they are more challenging to read, and the stories are lot more interesting than the stories you find now. I used to be obsessed with *The Hunger Games*; that was a big deal for me.

It was so good, I would cry on the subway reading that book! So tell me, what was it like when they asked you to walk in the Undercover show?
That was fun, a whole new experience. Something I had never done before or had thought I would ever do. And nobody really prepares you for it. I just showed up and all these super-tall models were there and I had no idea what I was doing. But I got there and the energy kicked in and it was really, really fun. If you love fashion, which I do, it is really exciting just to be there and know the designer and how hard they have worked on the collection, and how special it is to watch them bring their creations to life and to see it for the first time. It is a really special experience. I hadn't understood it before, but now I do; it was one of the best times I've ever had.

Were you familiar with Undercover?
I wasn't. Jun [Takahashi], the designer, reached out, and he loves *Stranger Things* and the whole collection was about eternal youth. He was really inspired by the show. It deals with kids, the feeling of being young, which he was inspired by. He incorporated that into his collection. He collaborated with Nike on this shoot we did, which was very, very cool, and he then asked me to open his show. I said: 'OK, I am not a model, but I guess it will be fun.' So I did it and it was more awesome than I expected.

It was also awesome because Undercover is one of the coolest brands.
There is always a crossover between actors and fashion, but Undercover is just so cool. It was so creative, a great experience.

Do you have any role models? If I was asked this question, I would say my mom, so a role model in your career or professional life?
I don't think there is one person who has all the qualities that I admire, like in one person. I see different people with different beliefs and qualities that I look up to. And I just like to combine all of those and I can make my own role model. What makes a good role model is when people use their platform to speak up for what they believe in and use their platform for good. I don't think you have to be an adult to be a role model. I think that kids think their role models have to be their age or older and like I said before, I see my little sister and I look up to her creativity and how she sees the world with a fresh perspective without any judgement. That is a role-model quality. Also, with social media, people can make themselves seem one way, but in reality they might not be that way. So you can make yourself look one way on social media, but you know in reality, you could really be a bad person. People should be careful because not everyone is how they seem. And you shouldn't try to replicate your role model either because if everybody was striving to be like someone else then there wouldn't be any unique people in the world.

Is there someone you think is using their platform or their voice in a way that you find admirable?
I feel like girls my age are really using their platform. Rowan Blanchard uses hers to speak out about different movements and things like that. Reese Witherspoon, too. It's about people who support causes genuinely not because they are trying to look good or anything.

Nobody likes a fake.
It is trendy now for people to care about things, to be 'woke'. But then there are brands that are doing that, too. It's sometimes hard to tell the difference, where authenticity goes. I like to think people are genuine about what they are spreading awareness about. I think you have to know the person, too. Because as I said, the people on social media might not be like that in real life.

Do you ever feel like there is pressure on you to look a certain way or say a certain thing?
Honestly, I think pretty much everybody feels that way. There is always pressure to look and talk a certain way. But I kind of ignore it, I mean it is there, but I don't acknowledge it. Again, the world would be so boring if everybody lived up to just one standard. You don't have to look a certain way to be beautiful. There is a lot of stuff out there right now, all really positive about embracing yourself, which is great, especially for young girls. People have to be happy with who they are and embrace themselves. It is your life – you do you.

'I lose my phone all my time; I let my battery die. I like being without it because it's better to enjoy life through your own eyes and not your screen.'

Have you heard?

How the digital world has transformed fashion's love of gossip. By Guy Trebay. Illustration by Jean-Philippe Delhomme

The gossip of the day travels along the front rows, around tables at Da Giacomo in Milan, Kinugawa in Paris, and The Grill in New York, or else through the digital ether, wafting like a tainted zephyr. Have you heard that X, a world-famous designer is riddled with cancer and is now on his last legs? Did you know that Y, barely back from rehab, has suffered a relapse? Of course, you know, don't you, that M is rumoured to be out as creative head of that big multinational, soon to be replaced by H? They say H has already relocated to Paris and is building a stealth team. What do you think about that diva designer tapped to head a global label? Did you hear he insisted on bringing his own team and held out for a contract paying $18 million a year? And how about that infamously dissolute model? Was she really so wasted at a garden party that she face-planted into a shrub?

It is empty and yet somehow important, this idle chatter that is a low-register soundtrack scoring the migrations of the fashion caravan, helping editors and photographers and critics and reporters and models and agents and all the assorted personnel while away the hours. And there is a surprising number of these. For all that the fashion cycles appear – and in many ways are – antic and exciting, they are also filled with longueurs, tedious periods of waiting that are filled with a hard to control anxiety induced by so much enforced passivity.

Are those in the fashion business more prone to indulge in gossip than office workers or supermarket cashiers, I wonder? Probably not. Yet spend enough time in front rows, backstage or at lavish (if seldom very jolly) dinners underwritten by corporate budgets and you cannot escape the impression that gossip is both catnip to the occupationally fabulous and also a critical professional tool.

The reasons are simple. No matter how dense our digital connections, news still travels first and fastest by word of mouth. Scurrilous or malicious or often downright misguided, the gossip that threads through the months-long fashion-show cycles serves as an odd form of community building. Drawn together twice yearly from scattered professional pursuits, the fashion pack reconstitutes itself ad hoc. Teams and individuals land in the fashion capitals of New York, London, Milan and Paris and power nexuses are quickly recalibrated. New players are incorporated into the group. New alphas are identified. Beloved characters made suddenly redundant are quietly cast onto the ice.

For a business as reliant as fashion on a roving population of freelance workers, this means of spreading information is strangely important. For all the minor players in what remains – despite its increasingly corporate centralization and vast global reach – a largely tribal business, tracking and diagramming personnel shifts and subtle changes of power are a necessary practice. Gossip is, of course, in all settings a form of currency; no matter how remote you are from the sources and principals of a given tale, having some to retail is a sign of belonging. And since the pursuit of the fashionable is an inherently conformist undertaking, gossip also tends to function as a mechanism of social and even moral regulation. Well before the establishment of the #MeToo movement, an awful lot of what you heard on the fashion circuit involved tales of sexual misdeeds or borderline criminal transgressions – light-fingered stylists, models pressured into compromising situations, social-media influencers greedy about 'samples', designers caught in South American love nests with underage boys.

It strikes me that this form of improvised governance is not necessarily a bad thing in a business that only lately instituted even rudimentary rules for the workplace. Long before public revelations emerged about photographers with unsavoury and predatory sexual habits, warnings were transmitted by jungle telegraph, tipping people off about who to watch out for and which dude was the one who would try to get into your pants.

There is something else. The entertainment value of gossip is, of course, largely predicated on the levelling sense it provides us of superiority over others, particularly those famous others so remote from our ordinary lives. Social media complicated all this somewhat when everyone in fashion (and also outside it) began to burnish their public personas with curated Instagram images of lives characterized by their dully perfected surfaces. Deep down we all know that, beyond the frame of those digital postcards, there must lie the usual mess of daily existence. Luckily, we can rely for reassuring confirmation of these suspicions on the good old rumour mill.

Spotify for magazines

The world's largest magazine collection goes digital.
By James Hyman. Illustration by Jean-Philippe Delhomme

'If you don't have a dream, how you gonna have a dream come true?' wrote Rodgers and Hammerstein, and to realize any dream, 'you gotta have faith', as George Michael sang. Excuse my song-based habit, but lyrics often best sum up how I feel and why I do what I do. Because I have a dream and I have absolute faith in its coming true. For me, magazines are 'always on my mind'.

Thanks to 30 years in the media business (presenting and producing for MTV and the BBC; working in music, film and print) I have amassed what has been referred to as 'a walk-in Google' of magazines. In fact, I now hold the Guinness world record for owning the 'largest collection of magazines in the world'. It currently contains over 100,000 issues, is growing at 30 percent a year (mainly thanks to extremely generous donations from collectors to whom I am eternally grateful), and is unique: over 55 percent of its titles are not held by the British Library. I am currently working to turn this collection, now called the Hyman Archive, into a new resource for all, and so taking the first steps towards my ultimate dream.

Since my early teens, my idée fixe has been to collect and share popular culture. My professional life began in 1988 when I joined the just-launched MTV Europe as a script-writer. I had to provide content for the VJs that would amaze, amuse and always entertain the channel's huge and diverse audience. Where best to source such information? Magazines, of course! Pre-Internet, the millions of publications on news stands around the world truly were our Google. Yet even then I knew that much of that contemporary print would be forgotten – tomorrow's fish and chip paper – and I knew I *had* to save it.

Since then, it's been an incredible journey and along the way I've met amazing characters who share my unrelenting passion for preserving print. People like Edda 'Scissor Sister' Tasiemka who has dedicated much of her life to snipping and cataloguing newspaper and magazine articles. Or Danny Posner who gave me the bug for collecting when I clocked the May 1984 'Electro' cover of *The Face* in his now sadly closed Vintage Magazine Shop in London's Soho. It was there in a basement filled with back issues that my magazine mania was born.

My archive's collection of pop-culture press now spans from 1850 to present day. Organized into sections, such as fashion, film and TV, music, sport, technology, politics, art, counterculture, design, photography and lifestyle, it contains issues of 1920s *Vogue*; 1930s *National Geographic*; 1940s *Melody Maker*; 1950s *Playboy*; 1960s *Private Eye*; 1970s *Nova*; 1980s *Smash Hits*; and 1990s *Entertainment Weekly*. Not to mention plenty of obscure titles such as *Girls Like Corpses*, *Factsheet 5*, *Modern Drunkard* and *2600* – all arguably of cultural significance, all passionate publishing.

Our next step is to transform all that paper into digital content on a definitive platform with sophisticated search and analytical tools. Call it a 'Spotify for magazines' that will function as a subscription business, respecting copyright and ensuring that rights holders are paid royalties, while giving the world an amazing new research resource. Imagine easily being able to search in a specific magazine for the first written mention or image of Kate Moss or to create timelines for a cover star and see how popular she was compared to others. You could discover how Bob Dylan connects to James Bond and President Obama, what joins Stanley Kubrick to Nike trainers, or uncover the roots of hip-hop culture in an unheard-of publication. How about tracking the evolution of brands through their advertising, what's likely to trend and how. The archive will be a treasure trove of unique, searchable content all in one place.

It is an archive that is going to keep expanding, too, because whatever you might be hearing, digital is not dominating everything and print is definitely not dead. Indeed, magazines are experiencing a sustained renaissance as readers once again appreciate the pleasure of paper and the physical object. When film director Christopher Nolan guest-edited *Wired*, he wrote that: 'A magazine offers a far more comfortable relationship with time – we can flick through it, stop, flip back, keep it forever. It can do a good job of representing spatial dimensions through photography and design.'

Physical manifestations of writing have been around since humans lived in caves and all media – including TV, film and the Internet – rely on print. So today, as the physical Hyman Archive becomes a digital reality, I am proud and thrilled to be using the best of today's technology to help bring the joy of printed media to a new and far wider audience.

Home. Work.

A letter to my freelance self from the comfort of my own home.
By Raven Smith. Illustration by Jean-Philippe Delhomme

At the beginning of last year, I took the plunge and went freelance. Like Thelma and Louise driving off the cliff, I left behind the security of paid vacation, regular working hours, sick days, and office cake. I started playing a different ballgame.

I spent nearly eight years as commissioning director at Nowness, a role that entailed a range of skills besides actually commissioning films. No need for a mini CV here, let's just say that I entered freelance life offering brands and channels a smorgasbord of roles and rates. I promised myself I'd say yes to all the work that came my way and then do a stocktake and decide what was working and what wasn't. So, a year in, how does it feel? I've replied 'fine' to so many emails asking how freelancing is that I've had to right-click synonyms for fine. For the record, the freelance life is currently tolerable-adequate-moderate.

Here are eight things I've learned over the past year.

1. Freelance life comes with a host of ups and downs. You go from altitudes so high there's not enough oxygen to the depths of the ocean where there's no light. The sun does shine, of course, but there's never quite the time to catch a tan. I've taken on jobs out of fear of there being no work and then ended up smashed to smithereens juggling way more than I expected. Every time I talk about this, I know it's a massive humble brag. You can get addicted to being busy. I went through a bout of hyperactivity last summer and complained the whole time.

2. There's no such thing as a money job. Everything you say yes to takes up your time, energy and focus. Money jobs tend to end up being absolute eye-bleeds, because your ultimate takeaway is profit not product. Better to stick to stuff that's worthy of your attention.

3. The freedom of freelancing that you think will be liberating is actually like a sheer drop from a cliff face. The fall is exciting, but your mortgage is following you down at exactly the same rate.

4. Your time is flexible. This is the biggest lolsob of all. You can spend all morning dicking about on Twitter and then have to stay up all night working. I thought I'd be watching *Loose Women* all day, but eventually the work needs doing. Delaying it is foolish and *Loose Women* is absolutely awful. Also, you will never finish way ahead of a deadline and feel satisfied. People who work like that are weird. Part of the thrill of creation is the impending deadline.

5. Food can be a distraction. The dull hum of the fridge can be like a siren luring me onto the rocks of cheese. I can spend a full hour making a sandwich; I think perhaps there's a work avenue in that. I even thought I could become Delia Smith, erotically spreading homemade hummus, until I discovered you have to boil the chickpeas for 90 minutes.

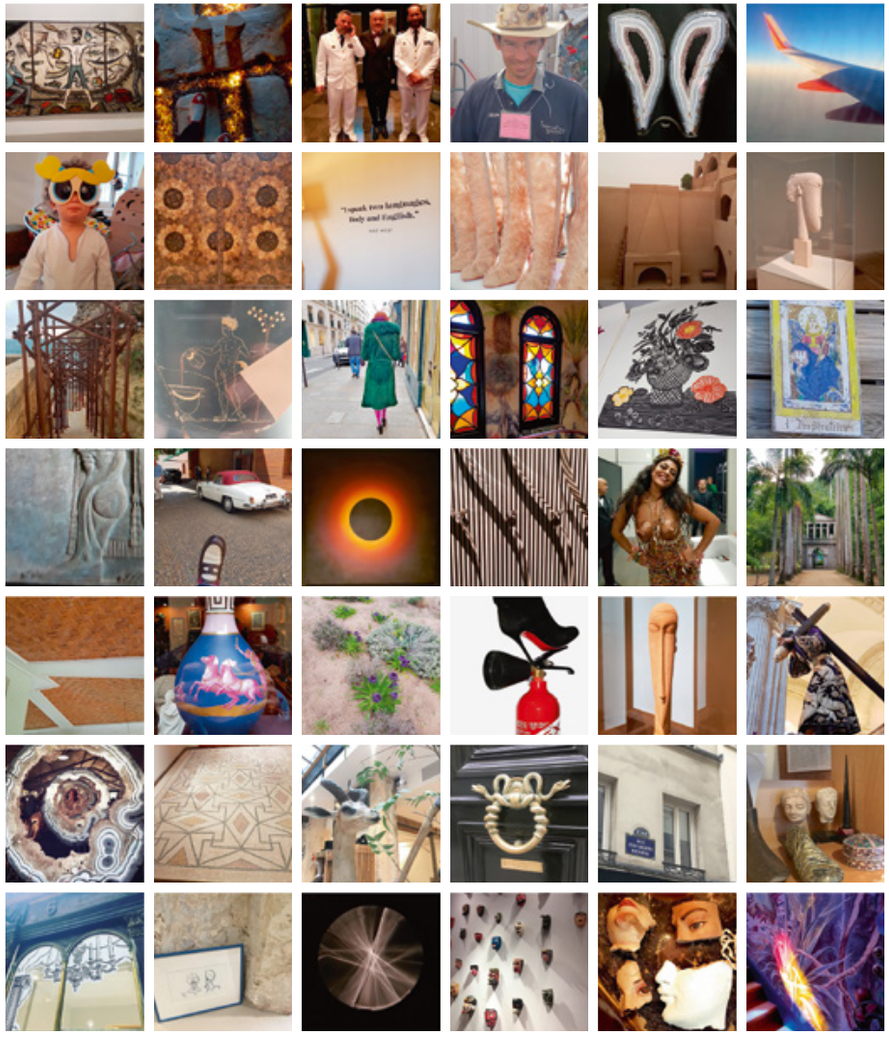
6. You can get too comfy at home. Your outfits swerve from meeting-ready to just-woke-up-tramp-slob. I now have the most amazing freelance pants: they're comfy and the seat has worn away to nearly nothing. I live in a pair of house clogs. When I do have to leave the house my normal clothes from normal brands are starting to feel incredibly special and glamorous. Oh, look at me in a shirt and I've moisturized! Fancy!

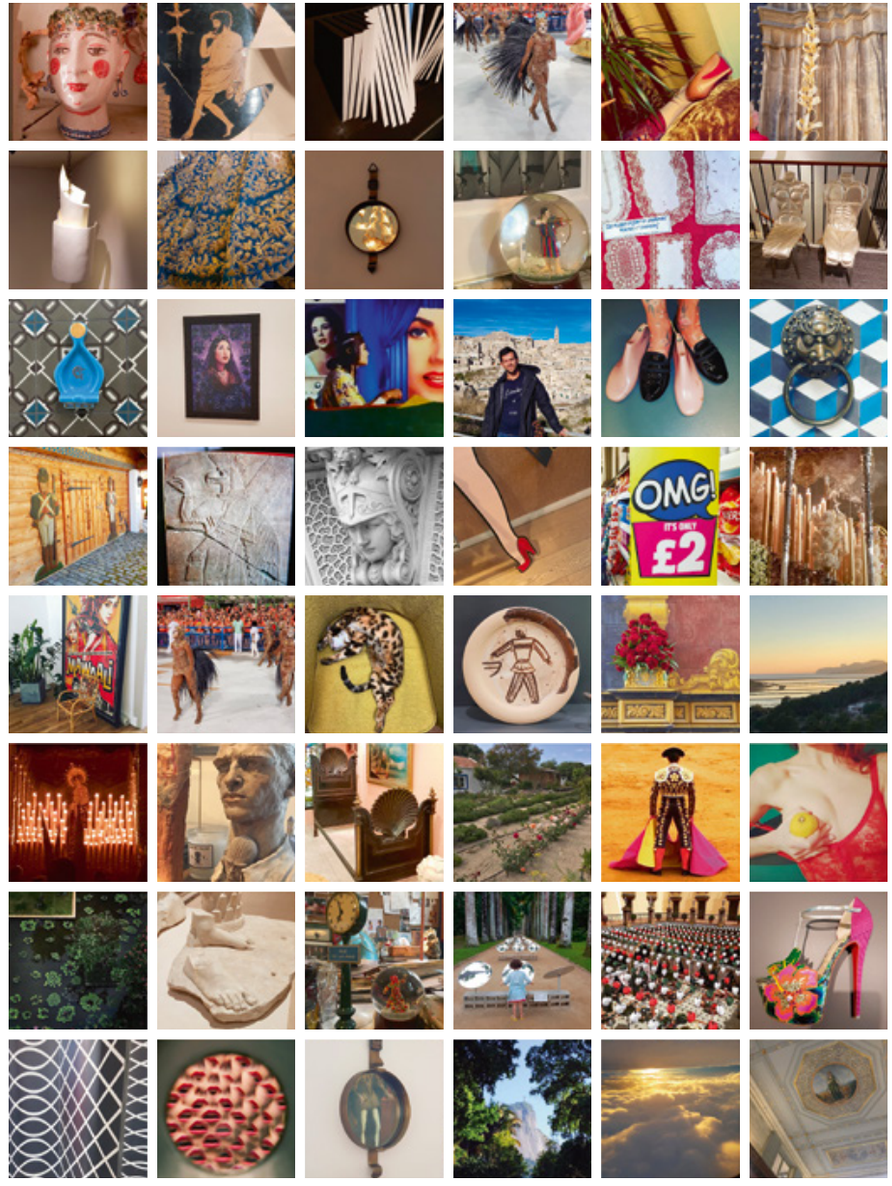
7. Your pets become your family. My relationship with my cat has morphed from parent-child to sibling rivals. We're standoffish all day and then vie for my husband's attention when he gets home. When the cat's with me, I ignore him, but I search for him when he's out of eyesight. The pussy co-dependency has come as quite a shock to us both. Despite the cat's company, there remain moments of crippling loneliness, of talking to yourself, of laughing at your own jokes.

8. Some days, you're writing and mid-sentence, you think you're the next Sylvia Plath or Shakespeare or the voice of your generation. Most of the time, however, the freelance life seems to mean typing into a void and incrementally morphing into your mother.

Camera roll

By Christian Louboutin





‘What makes it Them is us.’

Phillip Picardi and his LGBTQ team are giving Condé Nast an authentic queer voice. Meet Them.

By Raven Smith
Photographs by Brigitte Lacombe

In a roundabout way, Them was conceived through anal sex. In July 2017, *Vogue*'s cover story featured it-couple Gigi Hadid and Zayn Malick apparently 'embracing gender fluidity' by swapping clothes. It was a heavy-handed and tone-deaf approach to gender identity that outraged millennial readers and forced *Vogue* to apologize: 'we missed the mark.' Only a week before, little sister online publication, Teen Vogue, under the digital direction of Phillip Picardi, a then-25-year-old from Boston, had released a guide to safe anal sex, which said, 'It's important that we talk about all kinds of sex'. The use of 'we' here demonstrated the implicitly inclusive nature of the publication: peer-to-peer millennial discourse, rather than teacher-pupil education (albeit written by a millennial self-described sex educator). In a seismic shift, *Vogue* talking *about* millennials was eclipsed by Teen Vogue talking *with* millennials.

With Picardi overseeing its all-important digital output, Teen Vogue was pivoting from mini-fashionista editorial to voice of a new, alert, engaged generation. Typified by that sex-advice feature, Teen Vogue's sincere lateral tone of voice and non-salacious practicality resonated, shrewdly harnessing the power of the most underestimated group on the planet: teenage girls. *Vogue*'s little sister was *woke* and not going back to sleep.

Within days, Picardi – who was increasingly being recognized for spearheading Teen Vogue's record-breaking digital growth – was summoned to have lunch with Condé Nast's artistic director Anna Wintour to discuss future opportunities. A kind of Condé Nast carte blanche. And so, the idea for Them, a next-generation digital platform produced by and for the LGBTQ community, was conceived. According to Condé Nast's press release about Them, Gen Z-ers 'support brands that take a stand on issues they believe in personally' and 'more than half of Gen Z identifies as queer'. A social-change-focused LGBTQ platform was an inevitable and savvy addition to the company's portfolio.

Channelling Gen Z's energy into meaningful audience-first editorial is now Picardi's raison d'être. As chief content officer of Them (a role he has added to his continuing duties at Teen Vogue), Picardi is responsible for a team chronicling next-gen millennial stories and voices, harnessing and amplifying these expressions of change. Them puts LGBTQ identity politics front and centre as previously specialized social-media discussions punch into the mainstream consciousness. Them is a pastel-coloured rolling newsfeed of verbal and visual expressions of the modern (predominantly US-based) queer experience. Its stories showcase the intersectional narratives that have often fallen between the gaps of our worldview. It is a mix of earnest activism and bold optimism: a tender (and eerily accurate) self-care monthly horoscope sits alongside pieces questioning queer representation at the Oscars, fat-phobia in the bear community, and assessing whether 'Ancient Egypt was totally queer'. The platform is an uroboros, receiving feedback as it's transmitting; Them's audience simultaneously absorbs information and responds immediately, with commentary that shapes future stories, adding to the endless reciprocal Internet conversation. A stream of consciousness from a generation of evolving thinkers, with ideas being processed and published in tandem, Them is a thesis developing in real time.

Earlier this year *System* asked London-based writer and creative director Raven Smith to interview Phillip Picardi, the man the *New York Times* recently labelled 'Condé Nast's 26-Year-Old Man of the Moment'. The first time in February 2018 during London Fashion Week the pair shared a pit-stop high tea. For the second, a month later, Smith travelled to Condé Nast's New York headquarters at One World Trade Center, where he also met and interviewed the Them team.

Opening pages, from left to right:
Devin-Norelle, Amber Payne, Tyler Trykowski, Tyler Ford, Meredith Talusan, Aamina Khan, Maria Tridas, Marie Suter, James Clarizio, Zachary Krevitt, Dan Shinaberry, Phillip Picardi, Wesley Johnson.

Phillip Picardi
Chief Content Officer

Phillip Picardi
Chief Content Officer

Part One
London, February 18, 2018

Raven Smith: OK, it is recording.
Phillip Picardi: So, I was reading that you had worked at Nowness and that you guys published a film a day.

A film a day, every day, for seven years. It was savage.
Looking at the media landscape now, I wouldn't be able to identify a direct competitor to Nowness. There is probably more in the peripheral space. *i-D* does great artsy videos, so does SHOWstudio. Did you see the Gareth Pugh video they did last season? Oh my god, it is so filthy! It started with Olivier de Sagazan and Gareth Pugh layering themselves with moulding clay, painting a red phallus and then cutting through it so it looks like he was bleeding. It was shown in the IMAX theatre and the whole audience was like 'eeuww'.[1]

I like that though; things don't always need to be palatable.
It's interesting, sure. Some people are like, 'Why does it have to be palatable to be consumed?'

How do you find managing that within the context of Them?
Them is an interesting case study because I feel our mission has to be twofold. On the one hand, we are a queer staff, creating content for queer people and for queer consumption. On the other hand, we exist within this extremely normative corporation called Condé Nast. One could even say extremely white and normative. We see our mission as, yes, we are doing this for the queers, and then, what are we going to do to educate a wider audience about what we're about? We can be 'them'; we can be the LGBTQ community; we can be trans-youth. I think the best example of where we can be found is a video we did called *How to Raise a Child*.

What's the story behind it?
I grew up in a pretty conservative Catholic family and my sister was always very strait-laced: Boston college, bottle blonde and married to a banker. One of her best friends is raising a kid who essentially sounds like they're transgender. The parents thought he was their son who wanted to dress in girls' clothing, but there was actually more going on. I was inspired by this parent-child relationship, so we created a video with trans kids from all over the country interviewing their parents. It was viewed over 1 million times on Facebook, and the comments it got were very touching. There were a lot of parents who said, 'Thank you for this, I have felt so alone'. We felt we did something good for these trans-kids growing up, but also for the families who are raising them.

That's brilliant. It feels like video is the big medium at Them.
We did another video series called *Bedtime Stories*. We invited queer people to bed, and the rule was, you can bring something or someone. This one couple – I believe they were genderqueer – brought a massive dick candle. They were burning it in the bed while they talked about having sex with women, and it was kind of amazing. Then we had a couple who met as a cis couple and then one of them started transitioning. So the straight guy is now negotiating with the idea, 'Am I gay?'

How have your own life experiences shaped the way Them operates, its outlook, its editorial tone, its mission?
I grew up with three brothers and a very traditional dad, the type who came home at five and expected my mom to have food on the table. My brothers were hyper-masculine, super-athletic, played a lot of sports, and that was just not my template, not how I was born.

Where are you in the family?

> 'I eventually just used pictures of half-naked men as my Myspace background, and changed my display name to: 'I'm here, I'm queer, get used to it.''

I'm the fourth out of five children. When I was a kid, it became clear to me that I was extremely different just because of my family dynamics. And my mum was often protecting me, but even in her protection, which I think she considered benevolent, she was always telling me to straighten out in certain ways to avoid being teased or mocked.

And your family were aware that you might be ripe for bullying?
Yes, my family was always trying to protect me from being bullied, but the reality of it was, I was just fine. They were maybe projecting experiences that they had gone through onto me. Growing up it was very clear that I was gay. I would go into my mom's closet, put on her Manolos, and walk around in her lingerie. For read-a-book day in first grade, I

took a mini Spice Girls book and I had a Spice Girls lunchbox and Thermos. I was like *so* gay.

From day one.
When I came out at 14, I didn't think my family would be surprised, but they were really shocked. I was shocked by their shock. These days, when young queer kids ask for advice about coming out, I say: 'Tell your support network first and make sure that is not your family, so that you have somewhere to go when you're out.' I am sure most people's coming-out stories are not easy. But my family reaction was to push me back in the closet; I had to lie to my little brother for months; I had to lie to my grandmother. A lot of it was sad and very unnecessary. But what came out of that is that I had to find my own voice.

How did people react at the time?
Basically, they were not hospitable to me existing and prospering in their school environment. The only thing I really knew how to do was just be true to myself and just stick to my guns. If it hadn't been for my beginning and having been stifled and trying to find safety elsewhere I don't think I would have been so comfortable in my own skin today. And so what I have learned through working at Teen Vogue, and hearing from kids over and over again is that there is this craving for representation.

Tell me more about that.
Well, representation isn't just important because it needs to represent the world in which we live, it's important because it can really save a life – by seeing yourself somewhere you know that there is hope for the future and you can see a template for yourself. You can begin to map out your dreams and your future and your success; what you want from your career, your love life and your family. We need this for trans-people and the non-binary community, where the template for life is still very much being drawn. I think it is essential that we create media spaces that are welcoming and celebratory and honest about what life is like. And I hope that Them can be a true dedicated space for them.

People are shaped by their upbringings. Did part of your process feel like a reaction to yours?
We are all where we come from and that is clearly a big part of me. If you are ever at a big gay brunch with a bunch of queer people, almost everyone does their coming-out story. And that is how you get to know each other as something that you all have in common. I definitely think that documenting the queer existence with a thoughtful approach is important, especially for a mainstream publishing company like Condé Nast because we inherently have visibility and resources that make it easy for people to access our information.

Do you think in an ideal world that coming out will simply become less necessary?
I hope that one day coming out will be more of a choice; most queer people at some point are forced to come out, whether that is by other queer people or by straight people. I love that rebel spirit and maybe coming out will become obsolete, but I felt very liberated and empowered by my coming-out experience.

> 'On one hand, we are a queer staff, creating content for queer people. On the other, we exist within this extremely normative corporation called Condé Nast.'

Where did you turn?
I found myself to be more comfortable at school in that community, not relying on my family as much as my other siblings did. After a month or so of my mum not talking to me and my dad sending me to a Catholic therapist and all this bullshit, I eventually just went into Microsoft Paint, took pictures of half-naked men from Abercrombie & Fitch catalogues, and made that my Myspace background. And I changed my display name to: 'I'm here, I'm queer, get used to it.'

A digital coming out.
Exactly. Like, 'I'm going to show these assholes, I am not going to be silenced!' Ultimately, I was out of the closet and had controlled my narrative, and I did so in a digital way, which is very relevant to my subsequent situation at Them.

I think it is very character building for everyone…
Someone recently asked me, 'What is your advice for kids in the closet who won't come out?' and I was like: 'Do your thing. If you're not going to be safe when you come out of the closet or be evicted from your home or if your parents are going to stop paying for your tuition, those are all serious deal breakers that you should really consider, hopefully with a professional to help you think about what your next step is.' You can't force someone out of the closet. The reality is that coming out means less safety and security for some people.

Tyler Ford
Editor

I have been an out trans-person in the media for five years. My introduction was through reality TV, appearing on the second season of *The Glee Project*. I started writing for Rookie shortly after that, and although I am now primarily a writer, it has been a pretty winding path and I've done other media work like speaking at universities and conferences. A lot of millennials and Gen Z are multi-talented: our lives and careers are more fluid than previous generations. What makes a Them story? It's an authentic story from anyone in the LGBTQ community sharing their perspective and life experience. It's a story that educates people, whether it's to be more compassionate or more aware. It opens people's minds from a perspective that maybe people haven't heard before. It has a lot of heart. What makes it Them is us.

Tyler Trykowski
Senior Editor

My career started as an intern at *Playboy* magazine, which might seem ironic, but it isn't – the sexual freedom and first-amendment issues at the heart of *Playboy*'s editorial philosophy are very much aligned with a queer political and social ethos. I know at first blush it might seem that a magazine for straight men might be the least queer thing in the world, but if you dig deeper, there's a lot that's very queer about *Playboy*. It also bears mentioning that the magazine and Hugh Hefner were a bastion of early gay and queer rights. My time there was instructive and valuable, and in many ways was a natural foundation for what I do now. After a number of years at *Playboy*, I jumped over to Vice and became LGBTQ editor before coming to New York and joining Them. I had been interested in queer stories for a while and I was editing stories about trans-gender men and about the trans-community in politics, so I had already manifested an interest in that in my work.

If you are coming out as a trans-person, if you are 'passing' and you don't disclose that you're trans in your work life, there could be violence on the other side of that closet door. It is not for anyone to say what you should do.

Where does your drive come from?
I don't want to call this daddy issues, but people in my life expected less of me because I was feminine and gay and outspoken about it. They always underestimated me, shooing me away because my point of view was always too loud or radical. As a teenager, I felt ignored or stifled by the adults in my life. But the more I work with queer folks, discussing what 'makes' us who we are, the more I want to be wary of only framing ourselves in opposition to societal norms or power structures.

Fuck childhood tragedy, right?
I'm not, and I refuse to be, just a sum of childhood sadness. I come from love, and the understanding at a very young age that love is complex and hard to understand and doesn't always say the right thing or doesn't always feel the way you expect it to. You have to believe love is there, even if it's deep down, and you have to be willing to fight until it surfaces.

> 'I'm so tired of queerness being shaped only by tragedy. Lena Waith said that our differences and our queerness are our superpower.'

Did you always feel different?
I was always different, but there were moments where people in my life allowed me to taste the joy of just being myself. Like the Posh Spice doll my mom bought me but made me hide under my bed. Or when my little brother let me play the girl character in the video game without making fun of me. Or my sister painting my nails bright pink. And my grandmother getting me the 'girl toy' at McDonald's. It was also in the freedom granted to me by my parents – the unspoken understanding that eventually happened that, no, they didn't know what was best for me. That I had to find my own way.

You faced backlash *and* acceptance. Are you driven by both?
I'm so tired of queerness being shaped only by tragedy, and queer stories being compelling because of their melancholy. Lena Waithe[2] said that our differences and our queerness are our superpower. I much prefer that. That in some way, we are a part of this community of extraordinary beings. I like to think that what makes me ambitious is that I was always a little different to the people around me, and I was always the only one. And now here I am, fighting for the opportunity to be surrounded by a bunch of people who are unique and exceptional in ways that are complex and worthy of praise and attention.

What took you from your mum's Manolos to Teen Vogue?
Back when I was 18, just before I went to NYU, I emailed the editor-in-chief of Racked, which at the time was a sample-sale blog, and I asked for an internship. I got hired after a phone interview. I basically went from freshman orientation to fashion week back-to-back, which was quite an experience. Then, I was on fashionista.com, and I saw that Teen Vogue was hiring a web intern.

So you've always loved fashion?
No. In fact, when I realized I was definitely gay, I got really self-conscious and was really trying *not* to be interested in fashion. After I came out, I ended up in the magazine aisle and I picked up *Vogue*; I remember poring over it that day. *Vogue* was full all of this stuff that was just wild to me. I had never seen prices like that. I didn't know that Chanel made clothes! I had no idea about this entire world.

I love that.
A friend of mine and I took a car road trip to go and see the *Model as Muse* exhibit at the Met.[3] We drove like four hours there and back, just to go see this museum exhibit. But that was the power of *Vogue* and when I was a teenager, there was something in Anna's editor's letter or a feature in the magazine that was about gay marriage.[4] I remember mainstream media not really showing us that they even recognized gayness or queerness at all. There was a line in the piece saying something like, '…the fashion community should stand behind LGBTQ equality'. And I remember it being burned into my retinas and thinking this is what it feels like to be seen and heard and represented. That is when I started having serious ambitions of working at *Vogue*. When I started working at Teen Vogue, I loved everything about the spirit of it and its slightly underdog status: we worked really hard and things were a bit scrappier compared to *Vogue*. We had less staff, we had to fight for access, so it was so much more rewarding. We had a lot of freedom too, editorially, to pursue our voices, which I loved.

I get the impression that Teen Vogue changed massively, from being about what prom dress to wear into conversations that people were actually having.
Yes, when it first started, it was really designed as a magazine for a teenager who would later graduate to reading *Vogue*. But it's important to remember the context at the time: that was when Paris Hilton was on the rise, and so was *The Hills*,[5] and *Teen Vogue* was part of these major watershed moments in pop culture. And that was epic, but it was a different time. Now we have this generation that has had access to the Internet since they were all born; they have unbridled access to so much more information than any other generation, so in many ways are much smarter. And their perspective has changed. They are the most diverse generation in history. They don't see themselves reflected in a lot of publications a lot of the time, so we had to shift Teen Vogue. Honestly, Teen Vogue should shift every four years or so, like when you graduate from college, you need to recycle based on the incoming class's priorities. So, what we did was just common sense.

I have heard you say that when you work on a woman's publication, you don't just talk about clothes and beauty. Can you expand on that?
Growing up, I also read *GQ*. It covered news and politics, sports and culture, but it'd always take fashion and grooming seriously as well. Then you'd read women's magazines and politics never got the same real estate there. There was this dangerous assumption that women wouldn't be interested in politics, so you put it in a men's magazine. When I was growing up, so many girls were reading *GQ*, because they were interested in that perspective and point of view. Why weren't young women being treated that way, too? That's what I was asking myself.

Where did you first get a chance to push that editorial stance yourself?
When I was at Refinery 29,[6] Mikki Halpin was the editorial director. She was launching the site's news section. I was in the beauty department working on a story about cornrows, and I posted on Instagram a photo of two white women wearing cornrows. Someone commented: 'This is cultural appropriation and you are dumb if you think this is cool.' So, I bought this book called *The Encyclopaedia of Hair* and read about the history of cornrows and spoke to Mikki and we developed a broader story out of it. I ended up meeting all these incredible women and I realized we can go deeper on beauty. It was a really formative experience and we went on to take as much pride in everything we did for beauty as the other teams were doing for music and culture. Treating one subject as importantly as another. When I was at Teen Vogue, I felt like we needed the same spirit of reporting that they had at *GQ*. That was my take.

Let's jump to Them. It is such a striking symbol of our times, given that it is a Condé Nast title, and not an outsider indie. How did you pitch Them? Did you experience cultural issues with the people you were pitching to?
We were preparing for the mostly straight board meeting. I was given some insider info that the corporate contingent was concerned we were too isolationist, and that the brand would cater to too small an audience. We had to go show them the wide spectrum of queerness, where it touched on all lives. So we made a video that said, 'This is not a niche culture, this is the culture. This is not a moment, this is a movement. This isn't just about them, it is about all of us.' And so the tagline became, 'It's about all of us'. For me that just means we're all a little queer or we love a queer person or there's a queer person in your family who we love.

How was the pitch experience itself?
There were so many people around the table, these suited executives, and it came down to the end of the meeting, when the CEO looks around the table and says, 'OK, so what does everyone think?' Everyone is raising their hand saying: 'Do this, do this, this is great, this is now. This is the moment and we need to do it. We need to give this a chance.' I mean, I have been at this company since I was 18 years old, so looking around that table and seeing all those people's support was really beautiful. I actually went to the bathroom right after and cried, because I was so nervous and just so scared it was still going to get turned down. I'd been working on it for months, and I didn't know what I would do if it didn't get green-lighted. I was going to have to quit my job, and so I was thinking, 'How am I going to pay my rent?'

So everyone at Condé Nast has been supportive?

'I was given insider info that Condé Nast's corporate contingent was concerned we were too isolationist; that we'd cater to too small an audience.'

Meredith Talusan
Executive Editor

What I love about millennials is the blurring of the personal and professional. Older people pretend they have professional and personal boundaries and then communicate in a way that means their personal relationships are not visible to other people. That's how invisible centres of power form. It is good for people to be transparent. Yes, I am trans, but I also have an editorial and digital background, so that puts me in a unique position to engage in projects that push the envelope. Amplification and transparency, that is a really big value of mine as a journalist and editor – I want to do ambitious and groundbreaking things.

Devin-Norelle
Editorial assistant & Contributor

I am new to the Them team. I was working at J.P. Morgan before, which is obviously finance and a very different culture. As a person, I exist within grey areas, and so does my gender. At J.P., I didn't have much room to express those areas, so I began keeping a blog during off-work hours, as a way to humanize transgender people for a cisgender, heteronormative audience. As I began connecting with others, I realized I needed to be in a work environment with people who thought in ways I do and desired to bring about change. I don't fault the individuals I worked with, my co-workers were at times very progressive, but social progression at J.P. almost always hits a glass ceiling. When I hit that ceiling, it became the wrong environment for me. Over time, my writing evolved, becoming a much bigger deal than I ever could have imagined. Blogging transitioned into activism, my profile grew, and I was introduced to Meredith [Talusan]. Soon after, Phillip began following me on Instagram. I guess he liked what he saw because eventually I was hired to work with Them!

Aamina Khan
Community Manager

It would have meant a lot to the 12-year-old me to see people who are not only out, but also very unapologetic about who they are. It was hard to come to terms with being a queer woman because I didn't see representations of brown people being queer or bi. At Them, we have so many people of colour in our content, so perhaps it is easier for younger people to imagine themselves as adults. I think seeing people who have made it to the other side, landing in adulthood, is reassuring. I think that there is value in having adult examples to follow.

People get really excited about working on Them. We had tech specialists and engineers raising their hands to work on the back-end of the website. We had creative people dying to work on it, even on the pitch.

Do you consider it a difficult job?
Sometimes it can feel hard. Having worked on Teen Vogue and *Allure* and given that Them is my third brand at Condé Nast in a senior position, I am realizing I've been given a lot of freedom and I am really grateful for that. I know for a fact that is directly because Anna Wintour was passionate about Them. When Anna is your boss, you are almost less afraid because you know this very important person is right behind you. I can talk to her about any story we publish. She has an incredibly open, reasonable mind about this stuff, so I am not afraid. Everyone has been open to this idea of pushing the envelope and having a small brand with the core notion of experimentation.

The level of freedom you are being given seems significant. Do you think this is unique to you?
I don't know. I wonder what Will Welch[7] would say to that question, because look at *GQ Style*, that is such a cool brand, and *Bon Appétit* is cool, too. I love it! Even Teen Vogue. The things that we are publishing at that brand, sure, 10 years ago you never would have seen. It's hard for me to answer that question.

In terms of the stories you publish, what is your balance between editorial and branded? How many people do you have to please?
I have to please countless people! This brand wasn't going to launch until we could prove the concept and line up advertisers. For about four to six weeks, Anna, myself and Pam Drucker, who is the chief revenue officer of the company, were meeting with CEOs of companies, getting them to sign NDAs, trying to get people on board. Of course, Anna and Christopher Bailey are really close, so Christopher heard about this first, then we took it to Google and then to Lyft. Luckily with every call we went on, people were excited about it, so it happened really fast.

What are Them's business objectives?
Them is interesting because we don't have ad pages or banner ads to sell like more traditional digital media. What we are looking to do is create customized content with a partner or find advertisers who are interested in creating something that will amplify the voices of the LGBTQ community.

Do you have a specific example?
Google helped us with the launch sponsorship, which was conceptualized around the theme of a talk show we launched on YouTube. Their team gave us great feedback and access to talent and great ideas for how we could really make those concepts sing on YouTube. Beyond that we are looking not just at content that exists on Instagram or just on the site, we're also thinking what Them could look like as a film festival, a merchandise collection or an event series, for example. These are things that we will be exploring next year.

Are you continuing to make specific content with Google?
Yes. The rainbow check was our big thing with Burberry.[8] With Lyft, we did a video with Tommy Dorfman[9] where he rode around with a Lyft driver all day. He went to different stores, picked out products and then he took them to the Ali Forney Center, which is like the Albert Kennedy Trust here.[10] For Google, we are doing interactive maps, because this year we have the mid-term elections. Do you know what that means?

Not really, but tell me and we'll pretend I said yes.
Our presidential election is the big thing, but midterm elections are for Congress, and they are held two years later.

> 'There is actually a team at Google called the Gayglers. It's an LGBTQ group of Google employees and they are so excited about Them.'

And that is for who represents each state. See, I'm learning.
You're doing great! We are doing a state-by-state guide to LGBTQ equality, and then ranking the candidates who are running based on LGBTQ factors. Google said: 'We'll give you the Google maps for the project and you can work with Google engineers on building it.' There is actually a team at Google called the Gayglers. It's an LGBTQ group of employees at Google and they are so excited about Them. It is amazing to work with a partner who is for pro-LGBTQ legislation. They helped us launch a couple of YouTube shows. We launched a series called *The Library* this past week, and we're about to launch InQueery, which Google helped us launch. It's where we define terms and a queer lexicon. We're just getting started!

Part Two
New York, February 28, 2018

How do you define what makes a Them story?
I wouldn't say our criteria are that clear. Being a new space, things are constantly being defined, which can get challenging. Sometimes we write about *RuPaul's Drag Race*,[11] but whenever we put that out on our homepage the entire team is like, 'Should we really be doing this?' We have a lot of conversations like, 'Is this worthy of our attention or should we be spending our energy elsewhere?'

What's negative about *Drag Race*?
It's not negative *per se*, I think it's great. But it doesn't feel Them, for some reason.

Because I thought, 'Oh, it's going to be all about queer issues and I know loads about that', and in actual fact I was like, 'Wow, this is all new. I'm learning loads!'
It has been fascinating, and I am learning a lot, too. You have to be really open, editorially. With Teen Vogue, I have a very clear instinct and direction – I can say yes or no really fast. But with Them, there is always a negotiation that involves multiple editors chiming in, and us having to agree on what's the best way forward. It's a very different way of working; it's a lot more sensitive and collaborative.

It sounds nuanced.
It is incredibly nuanced. Aaryn Lang, who appears on Them's video show *The Library*, talking about trans incarceration, said: 'It's great that we're talking about this, but we should also be making space for trans-people to be happy, celebrated and beautiful, not just talking about their tragedy.'

Have any stories created a backlash?
I found a stand-up comic on Twitter named Philip Henry and he has a column on Them called *Dear White Gay Men*. I am not sure everyone understands his sense of humour. He did this piece on a Senate election where Roy Moore, a[n alleged] paedophile,[12] was defeated by Doug Jones, a Democrat. Doug Jones's son is openly gay and was standing behind his father when Vice President Mike Pence came to swear him in. Pence is very homophobic, and he was onstage with the openly gay son. Human-rights campaigners and several gay organizations were saying, 'This is the resistance hero that we need'. Philip Henry's take was more critical, as in: 'What the fuck is he resisting? His dad is working in politics, shaking the vice president's hand! This isn't resistance, calm down.' It was very funny and poignant, and a good example of how resistance can be co-opted by mainstream interests. Off the back of the piece our CEO and communications team received masses of hate mail. Philip's Twitter account was dug through and people were sending me ancient Tweets he had written. So that was tough. Then we ran another piece about a trans-woman who confronted Rose McGowan;[13] we had a lot of backlash over that one, too.

I think it's really tough because whoever you talk to has their own vision of their part of the story. There isn't a judgement-free lens.
It is tough, but when the language McGowan uses is deliberately trans-exclusionary… but I just hope she's OK.

Women in the public eye get lots of shit.
I have mostly women on staff, as does Teen Vogue, of course. My close friend, Lauren Duca, was one of my columnists at Teen Vogue and her piece 'Donald Trump is Gaslighting America' went viral.[14] For the past 18 months, I've seen the aftermath. Her private information has been posted publicly online. She's had rape threats, death threats. Her husband has been smeared publicly. There is a level of critique and constant analysis of women that is so exhausting. After Teen Vogue published its

> 'When Anna [Wintour] comes in and looks at the content, she'll say, 'That's fine to do that, but where's the positive, where's the smile?"

For me, *Drag Race* is what other people do when they want to talk about queer culture.
I would agree with that. This space has been penetrated, sorry for the pun. I think there is a straight gaze that's being applied to *Drag Race,* and maybe it doesn't quite belong on Them.

It's hardly a breaking story for the queer community.
Sure, and at the same time we did a piece on non-binary people talking about their identity and that was one of our top stories ever. We are more about finding stories that aren't being told in the media that well.

When I went to Them online I was surprised, in a positive way.
Really? Tell me why.

Maria Tridas
Video Producer and Editor

I went to journalism school and came out as lesbian in my senior year at college. About four years ago, I came into my intersex identity. Identifying as two letters in the LGBTQI alphabet, I felt like I wanted to hear more of these stories and also have the ability to tell them first-hand. We're really focused on quality video content. Like the *Butch Please* video that highlighted something people thought had been disappearing, but was actually just under-reported or forgotten. What's interesting is how Them reaches people outside the LGBTQ community. Some of the comments on *Butch Please* say: 'I am not queer, but I present more masculine and I have never seen myself represented this beautifully before.'

Zachary Krevitt
Motion-Graphics Editor

There was a lot of thought put into our pastel gradient design. You look at the rainbow flag and you see how it's broken up and our idea with this gradient is to look more at a spectrum of colours. Looking at the small in-betweens and all the different people and bodies, rather than rigid segments. That is how more and more young people are feeling, one thing one day and something different the next. There's a fluidity and we wanted something that represented intersexuality and a broad spectrum. That gradient is definitely Them.

Chella Man
Columnist

Growing up in a very small town in Pennsylvania, I was known as the boy named Rachel. I didn't connect with the body I was in. Luckily, my parents were incredible, letting me cut my hair and wear the clothes I wanted to wear. When I was four I realized that I had hearing loss, so from a very young age I stood out. Less than a year ago I realized, or let myself realize, that I wanted to transition. I was like, 'How did I put up with that for so long?' So, of course, I immediately wanted to preach to the world and let people know this was possible. Even if I wasn't comfortable at the time, I knew this story needed to be out there, people needed to understand that bodies like this exist. In the future I hope that people can see themselves as their own representations, and that they have the safety and privilege to do so. You don't need to see people like you in big movies, you can just look in the mirror and see yourself and know that you exist and that can be enough.

anal-sex article, there was a backlash. I thought, 'The fact that you guys are so upset about us teaching kids about anal sex just shows that you have so much homophobia existing within your communities'. I talked explicitly about how education is not encouraging sex; it's about empowering and helping people to make decisions about their bodies that are wise, smart, and healthy. The level of critique was a lot for me to handle. At the same time, my wellness editor – even though she hadn't spoken out about the piece publicly like me – was receiving significantly worse critiques and abuse. The only difference there is that she is a woman. Men feel that they can intimidate women, so they use their platforms to do that, which is just sick. There is absolutely a double standard. It is absolutely harder for women to have a voice and to have an opinion, while men are given more leeway and are more protected, because men run these systems.

What does Condé Nast think about stories that ruffle feathers?
I've not heard anything back. Condé Nast has a long-standing reputation for standing by the editors. I am really lucky that Anna is my boss, so if there's a problem she brings it to my attention and we have a conversation. I'm never being scolded; I really appreciate that about her. As the guardian of the editors here at Condé Nast, and the editorial voice within those boardrooms, Anna absolutely advocates our best interest and point of view, which is huge.

So, you feel supported by the entire ecosystem.
Yes, and that also trickles down to Teen Vogue as well. We've published things like what to gift your friend after she's had an abortion. And that guide to safe anal sex. I didn't fear retribution any time I published anything like that; in fact, the company actively reached out to us, to make sure we were OK because of the vitriol we got externally.

Let's talk more about your rapport with Anna Wintour. From the outside, she is still considered a fairly daunting character.
I was initially daunted by her; she is the most successful, powerful woman in publishing. It is unequivocal – she's an icon. There is no one else alive today I would look up to and revere as much as her.

Has she given you any specific advice?
Lots of advice. One time I was taking criticism very personally – I forget after which episode – and she looked at me and said: 'You have to have a thick skin and you have to be firm in your convictions. When you publish something, you stand by it.' It was really good to have perspective from someone who has lived through more controversy than me. When Anna focuses on Teen Vogue and Them, she always focuses on optimism.

Does that differ from your own perspective?
When we talk about the queer or marginalized communities, we talk about social justice, and can sometimes focus on the negative. When Anna comes in and looks at the content, she'll say, 'That's fine to do that, but where's the positive, where's the smile?' Especially with Them, she says: 'Of course, these aren't the best times for the queer community, but where's the celebration? I don't want it to be just doom and gloom.' Her vehicle for that most of the time is fashion and it's been cool to partner with her on that.

Do you sense that Them's influence and culture could have a presence in corporate settings beyond your direct market?
Well, we already get asked to speak at corporations about how to help make their policies more LGBTQ inclusive. A lot of these companies are asking us, 'What can we do for the LGBTQ contingency at our organization that would make them feel more included here?'

'Sometimes we write about *RuPaul's Drag Race*, but whenever we put that out on our homepage the entire team is like, 'Should we be doing this?''

We've talked about representation at a boardroom level for non-binary trans-people. Can you think of any other examples where that is happening?
In other companies? My friend Janet Mock, who lives in LA, is a producer on the show *Pose* with Ryan Murphy.[15] She started off as a writer on that show. Her life experience ended up being some of the most valuable in the typical brainstorming they were doing with the writers, so she was elevated to producer, which then influenced the way the show is at a broader lever: they are casting more trans-people, and how they are approaching trans-people's lives in general. Jill Soloway[16] at Topple Productions identifies as non-binary, and employs trans-people to work for her company. It's interesting to see

how the programming has changed for a lot of the shows they are working on now there's literally different representation at the table. And that's just the entertainment industry.

Danica Roem's election here in the US[17] has put trans politicians on the map in an interesting way. I'm interested to see what her legacy will be and how she continues to shake things up as an elected official.

Would you consider what you are doing as a form of activism? And is the new activism about having to play a different game? That's a big question…
I don't think that it is an either/or. It is vital we have people who are revolutionary, and who are intent on killing or overthrowing the system. But activism doesn't have to exist in such binary terms. Constantly critiquing the system is also very valuable. Constantly pointing out its flaws, its hypocrisy, and making a platform out of that, will always be necessary. But for me that is not how I choose to exemplify my activism.

Do you think that the media can get too caught up in what's wrong, what needs to be fought against?
Social media can be very reactionary, and we can be in our echo chambers, too. You know, we're often talking about our traumas or our experiences, and often queer people are encouraged to air those experiences in a public forum. So we need to remind ourselves that we have a lot to celebrate, too, even if it's just in being ourselves. Making a concentrated space for that is empowering.

An empowering space within Condé Nast?
I am sure that there are plenty of people who are very cynical about what we do. I don't discount or ignore that cynicism, but if I can make this space a better place when I leave it – and by that I don't just mean the corporation within which I work, but also the media at large – then I will feel that I have done a good job. It is not just about hitting my numbers and goals and making a platform for myself. It is about making this a more hospitable environment for the people after me, too. I am glad that I am able to represent young queer people in boardrooms of people who would normally be perceived to be inhospitable. I'm not afraid of telling the truth in those meetings. In fact, they have been very welcoming.

How does it feel to find yourself front and centre? As the face of the Them, as, I want to say, 'the othered'? I can't put it a better way.
I'm really careful about the opportunities I take to speak. If I can't bring the Them team along with me, more often than not I will say no. You have to be careful about that kind of stuff. As a white, cis, gay dude my voice has been more or less heard. I try to be careful.

Why a career in media and not pure activism?
I'm still young; it could change. It could be politics next, I don't know. Media is the template I began in, so this is the thing I wanted to explore and change. I am happy to be here – at the place that produces the magazines I read growing up. I don't know what the future holds. Who knows? I'm really into politics now.

Do you not think the new activism could be charming and lively rather than stoic?
Look at the kids in Parkland [after the mass shooting at their school]. I was just reading about this spring awakening in Parkland; a lot of them were theatre kids, completely unafraid of making a bold and audacious statement. When they go on stage, they deliver. They give you goosebumps when they talk; I don't think they are stoic, but young and empowered activists today.

They are so perfectly placed and so in over their heads as well. They have this platform and they're navigating it as they use it. There's this unapologetic, kind of fearless clarity that they have, that I think we lose as we get older.
It is fascinating and so important to take them seriously and that's what the world is doing, and I love that. It is wild.

It is wild and really exciting. In your ideal world, where do you see Them in five years?
It is hard to say, and I am reluctant to say anything about five years time, because look how much has changed in the last five years. My dreams for Them are mainly to do with having a big website and making it a daily site, posting 10 things a day and breaking news.

How many do you post at the moment?
About three times a day.

That's loads.

'Danica Roem's election in the US has put trans politicians on the map. I'm interested to see how she continues to shake things up as an elected official.'

Fariha Róisín
Columnist

I'm Muslim and I'm queer and those two things have been very important parts of my identity because there obviously isn't a lot of transparency with queer Muslims; there's a lot more silence with the experience in those communities. Writing the astrology column for Them, I just feel grateful that I can write something where I don't have to constantly go back and self-interrogate. I am not being grandiose, I am not saving anybody, but it's a difficult time for an anyone who isn't white or cis or straight, and with astrology, sometimes people need something that's bigger than their identity, something that's more universal, so they can just escape. I was raised by Marxists, so I understand the anti-corporate mentality, but I also think it's important that Condé Nast has created a space where they can pay a ton of young LGBTQ creatives and give them a platform. What I get paid for my astrology column allows me to survive.

Wesley Johnson
Associate Designer

James Clarizio
Visuals Editor

Teen Vogue publishes around 40 stories a day.

That is crazy. Were you overseeing that when you were at Teen Vogue?
As digital director, yes. For me, it's more interesting looking at distribution from various data points. I'm interested in documentary-film work, and making something that is going to a film festival or doing events and working with community centres all over the world.

If I have an ambition for Them, it would be that it can offer Them spaces in Russia or China, where LGBTQ rights are still being so fought for, and make sure that we're lending our expertise, resources, corporate power and protection to the people who really need it. I would say that is my goal. A team across the globe. We have gotten so many messages from people who work for Condé Nast International, from all over the world saying, 'We need Them here more than you need it there'.

One last question. We never really got to the bottom of what makes a Them story. How would you complete the sentence, 'I know this is a Them story because…'
… it is not gay, not lesbian, not bisexual, not trans, but it is queer.

Bingo.

1. Gareth Pugh's Spring/Summer 2018 collection was presented in a film conceptualized by Nick Knight, choreographed by Wayne McGregor and starring 'French philosophical artist' Olivier de Sagazan. It premiered on September 16, 2017, on Europe's largest cinema screen at the BFI IMAX in London. The unsettling 16-minute short, is perhaps best described as a Francis Bacon painting come to life in a zombie film channelling Jonathan Glazer's *Under the Skin*. The clothes are often difficult to see.

2. When Chicago-born actor, comedian and writer Lena Waithe became the first queer black woman to win an Emmy for comedy writing (for an episode of *Master of None* that she co-wrote with Aziz Ansari), her acceptance speech at the September 2017 ceremony was widely acclaimed: 'The things that make us different, those are our superpowers – every day when you walk out the door and put on your imaginary cape and go out there and conquer the world, because the world would not be as beautiful as it is if we weren't in it.'

3. *The Model as Muse: Embodying Fashion* ran May 6-August 9, 2009, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. It set out to explore how high fashion has influenced ideals of beauty from 1947 to 1997.

4. 'I'm Anna Wintour in support for marriage equality,' began a video the *Vogue* editor made in May 2011. 'As far as I'm concerned, having the right to say "I do" is as fundamental as the right to vote.' Two years later, the US Supreme Court's ruling guaranteeing same-sex couples' right to marry even provoked Wintour's first-ever tweet. On June 26, 2013, she wrote: 'Today's rulings are a big step forward for all Americans striving to achieve equality. I couldn't be happier or more proud. –A.W.'

5. *The Hills* was a reality TV show that aired on MTV from May 2006 until July 2010. It was centred on Lauren Conrad – who had previously 'starred' in another reality show, *Laguna Beach: The Real Orange County* – and her quest to work in fashion.

6. Refinery29 defines itself as 'the original next-generation women's media company' and now has US, UK and German versions, each providing 'optimistic and diverse storytelling, experiences, and points of view to our audience of smart, curious, passionate women'.

7. Will Welch began his career at *GQ* in 2007, becoming its style editor in 2014. In December 2015, he was appointed editor-in-chief of *GQ Style*, a Condé Nast men's style quarterly, and in January 2018, also became *GQ*'s creative director, replacing long-time director Jim Moore.

8. The Burberry rainbow check was officially presented on February 17, 2018, at Christopher Bailey's final collection as the house's designer. 'There has never been a more important time to say that in our diversity lies our strength, and our creativity,' he wrote when the pattern and Burberry's accompanying support for three LGBTQ organizations was first announced. Them published a co-branded story with Burberry, shot by Alaisdair McLellan, on Valentine's Day, 2018.

9. Tommy Dorfman is an actor best known for his role in Netflix series *13 Reasons Why*. He married his partner, Peter Zurkuhlen, on November 12, 2016. Their wedding gift list, which was hosted on zola.com, included a Joseph Joseph Elevate 5-piece wood utensil set with carousel; a Villeroy & Boch La Classica Nuova Napkin Ring (set of four); and a Love Is Art Intimate Painting Kit – Black & Metallic Edition. All were purchased for the couple.

10. The Ali Forney Center is a New York City-based organization helping homeless LGBTQ young people. Founded in 2002, it is named after a gender-nonconforming teenager who was shot and killed in Harlem in 1997. The Albert Kennedy Trust was set up in 1989 in Manchester, UK, and, according to its website, was the 'first ever service for homeless LGBT youth'. It now has centres in Manchester, London and Newcastle.

11. The 10th season of reality show *RuPaul's Drag Race*, a continuing quest to find the best new drag talent in the US, began airing in March 2018.

12. Roy Moore was standing for election to the US Senate in Alabama when he was accused of sexual misconduct by nine women. He is alleged to have molested or harassed the women in the late 1970s, when he was in his 30s and they were teenagers. *The New Yorker* reported that he was also banned from a local mall in the early 1980s for repeatedly trying to pick up adolescent girls. Moore lost the election in December 2017. In an interview with Sean Hannity on Fox News Radio a month before his defeat, Moore repeatedly denied the women's accusations, but did admit: 'You understand this is 40 years ago, and after my return from the military, I dated a lot of young ladies.'

13. The Them article, entitled 'Rose McGowan Broke Down in a Transphobic Rage', was an interview with trans activist Andi Dier who had confronted McGowan about the actress' supposed transphobic comments made on a RuPaul podcast in July 2017. The showdown took place at an event in a New York bookshop to publicize *Brave*, McGowan's memoir of sexual assault. As Dier was being removed from the event, she shouted 'white cis feminism'; this, according to multiple media outlets, provoked McGowan to react forcefully and reply: 'Don't label me, sister. Don't put your labels on me. Don't you fucking do that. Do not put your labels on me. I don't come from your planet. Leave me alone. I do not subscribe to your rules. I do not subscribe to your language. You will not put labels on me or anybody. Step the fuck back. What I do for the fucking world and you should be fucking grateful. Shut the fuck up. Get off my back. What have you done? I know what I've done, God dammit.'

14. Lauren Duca's article was published on Teen Vogue on December 10, 2016, five weeks before Donald Trump's inauguration as president. It quickly went viral.

15. Janet Mock was born in a boy's body but always considered herself a girl. She underwent gender-reassignment surgery in Thailand aged 18. She has since written two memoirs, worked as a journalist and a TV presenter, and become an activist for trans rights. She recently became a writer and producer on *Pose*, a new TV series about New York's 1980s trans scene, created by Ryan Murphy, the man behind *Nip/Tuck* and *Glee*.

16. Jill Soloway created TV series *Transparent*, which over five seasons has followed one late middle-aged man's transgender journey. Since the show launched in 2014, Soloway has announced a new identity as a gender non-conforming queer person.

17. Danica Roem is a US journalist and, since January 10, 2018, a member of the Virginia State Assembly. She is the first openly transgender person to be elected to and serve in a US state assembly.

Photo and video assistant: David Coventry.

‘On the days we wore uniform, everyone was equal.’

Mixing function and folklore, ritual and gender, Craig Green is redefining menswear.

Interview by Hans Ulrich Obrist
Photographs by Lena C. Emery
Styling by Camille Bidault-Waddington

Knit top, jeans and shoes,
Autumn/Winter 2018

Black flag sculpture,
Spring/Summer 2016

Opposite page:
Multi-layered knit top and trousers,
Autumn/Winter 2018

This page:
Large white sculpture,
Spring/Summer 2018

This page:
Coat, trousers and shoes,
Spring/Summer 2018

Opposite page:
Trousers,
Spring/Summer 2016

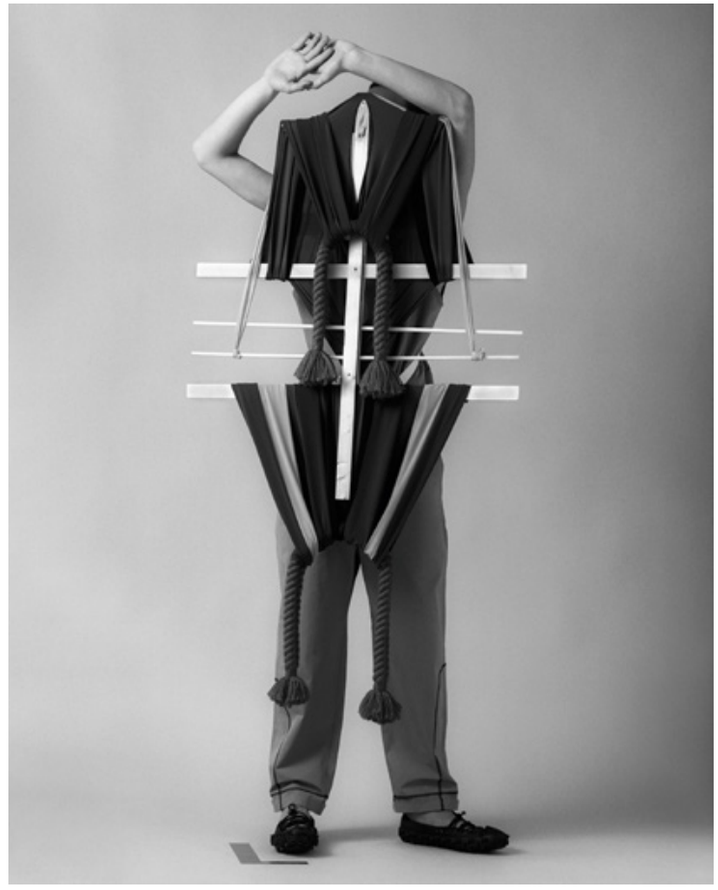
Model: Sasha Pivovarova. Special thanks: Anita Bitton at Establishment Casting, Sara Helmig.

This page:
Cape and shoes,
Spring/Summer 2018

Opposite page:
Top, trousers and shoes,
Spring/Summer 2018

Opposite page:
Top: Green tie-dye cardboard sculpture and shoes, Spring/Summer 2014.
Bottom: Coat, trousers and shoes, Autumn/Winter 2018.

This page:
Olive sculpture, trousers and shoes, Autumn/Winter 2018



Opposite page:
Electric-blue flag sculpture,
Spring/Summer 2015

This page:
Large multi-coloured sculpture, trousers and shoes,
Spring/Summer 2018

Opposite page:
Olive sculpture, trousers and shoes,
Autumn/Winter 2018

This page:
Top and trousers,
Spring/Summer 2018

This page:
Top and jeans, Spring/Summer 2018

Opposite page:
Top, Spring/Summer 2018

Photographer's assistants: Tex Bishop & Jodie Herbage. Models: Maeva at Heroes; Archie, Kish, Jacob at Elite; Zorka at Premier; Tabby at IMG; Searleth at Next. Hair stylist: Soichi Inagaki at Art Partner. Hair assistant: Rebecca Chan & Taeko. Make-up artist: Lucy Burt at LGA Management. Make-up assistant: Kite. Set design: Georgina Pragnell. Set-design assistants: Harry Stayt & Ellis Searson. Fashion assistants: Garance Chaplain & Georgia Illingworth. Casting director: Henry Thomas. Casting scout: Gabrielle Lawrence. On-set producer: Sebastian Bailey. Producer: Laurene Mpia. Production Director: Elise de Rudder.

Craig Green's story reads like a route map for young British designers to follow. First, complete the MA in fashion design at Central Saint Martins. Then, using the momentum of your graduate show land a spot with Lulu Kennedy's support platform Fashion East or the British Fashion Council's NEWGEN. After three seasons, having solidified your position as an emerging designer in the press and winning the trust of buyers, go solo. If you'd like, then you could always apply for the LVMH Prize or the ANDAM, and in the process gain more recognition and advice from industry professionals.

None of this will happen, however, without the sort of raw design talent and clear vision that Craig Green has shown since his first collection in January 2013. The London-born designer started small, first working out of his parents' house in 2012, then at the Sarabande Foundation – set up in memory of Alexander McQueen – where he had a studio until late 2017, always helped by close collaborators, who are often also friends and family. While his business has grown, his vision – built on the foundation of his MA graduate collection, created under the nurturing eye of the late Louise Wilson – has remained constant. His ongoing investigation into ideas of function and protection, ritual and folklore, has produced menswear that is complicated in its simplicity and speaks across gender and geography: beautifully cut "uniforms" with carefully judged detail. He has also made each of his catwalk shows a celebration of artistic freedom. Originally at Central Saint Martins to study art, he has created sculptures for almost all his collections, transforming basic and found materials (plywood, tennis balls) into portable, wearable structures that complement and play off the clothes. While this has occasionally created some background noise – the face masks in his first collection, made from broken garden fencing, provoked a wave of sneering vitriol from Britain's most conservative tabloid newspaper – his approach has been hailed by both buyers and critics who have praised its deep emotional resonance. Indeed, Green's vision collects new converts with each passing season.

Artistic director of London's Serpentine Gallery, Hans Ulrich Obrist, sat down with Green to discuss how the designer discovered the work of artist Rachel Whiteread, how he studied in Walter Van Beirendonck's library, and how he creates clothing inspired by nuns and knights.

Hans Ulrich Obrist: Let's talk beginnings. Was it an epiphany during your childhood or adolescence that led you to fashion or was it a gradual awakening?

Craig Green: I come from a home that was really unrelated to art and fashion. My dad is a plumber and my mum is a nurse, so no one from my family is in a creative field at all. But our house was always filled with building materials, like big immersion boilers, and so was our garden, which was always really overgrown. I always had these things surrounding me, as well as people who made things. My mum was a Brownies leader,[1] so she was always doing arts and crafts, and I guess we came from a household of just making things. I've always liked to draw and originally I thought I wanted to be a portrait painter, because at school it was one of the things I seemed to be good at. But at that point I didn't even know what Central Saint Martins was; I'd never read a fashion magazine. I was going to study art because I wanted to be a painter or sculptor.

Did you grow up here in London?

Yes, north-west London, just on the outskirts, Hendon. It's a bit like a village-y community.

So, the countryside?

Almost. It's on the edge of London where it has loads of green fields. People don't really think of it as London; it is on the motorway that leads you up to the north. It's one of those places where everyone knew each other in the pub, everyone knew each other's business. I went to the same school that my mum and my grandfather went to. It is like a village within London. In terms of an 'epiphany', it was more of a gradual process. I applied to Saint Martins because a friend of mine's dad was a prop maker for the BBC, and he said it was the best art school to go to, so I went to the open day with them. Then, when I was on the foundation course, there was something about the people I met on the fashion course: everyone was there all the time, and everyone would go out together and work really hard. I was really drawn to that community feeling. I applied to the fashion-print course, because I thought that if I am bad at making clothes, then at least I can maybe paint or draw. It was very haphazard actually. I feel like you can't really make mistakes any more in how you choose your education because the fees are so high. When I was there, I was lucky enough to have a scholarship.

'My dad is a plumber and my mum is a nurse; no one from my family is in a creative field. But our house was always filled with building materials.'

It's very different when your education is free. You can experiment more.

Yes. I thought I could maybe go on the fashion course for one year, then change at the end of that year and go back on to the art course. I was lucky to have that freedom to pick and choose as it went, which I imagine is very different to now.

You were testing things. The future is often made of fragments from the past, so did you have any role models? Who were or became your heroes and heroines?

I was drawn to Rachel Whiteread.[2] I loved the pure and simple but really ingenious idea of what her work was about. Fischli & Weiss[3] was one of the first things I saw at the Tate around 2007; they had that full room where they'd remade things in other materials. But from the very beginning, it was the painters Lucien Freud and Jenny Saville[4] who I found inspirational. I was obsessed with realism and trying to paint something exactly as it was. I didn't really know anything about art. I just liked to paint and draw at the beginning, but then when I discovered other artists, I guess my mind was a bit more open to that.

It's interesting about Rachel Whiteread and Fischli & Weiss. From the beginning, it seems you had very sculptural inspirations.

What I loved about Rachel was the idea of space, and that it was also a physical form like a house. Maybe there's something about that: our house was always full of people; the door was always open; my mum would make friends with everyone; she was very social. She was also a childminder, so after school there would be like 10 children every night. We had animals and it was all about our *house*. So maybe there was something in that.

So you had artists who inspired you, but you also had a mentor at Central Saint Martins, the late Louise Wilson.[5] This interview could be an opportunity to pay tribute to her great influence. She was someone who helped so many people. How did you meet her, and what was you experience with her like? I never really spent time with her, so she has always been this mystery to me, this amazing person who was at the beginning of everybody's career. What was the secret of Louise Wilson?

Just to backtrack, I had two very important teachers. The first was my A-level teacher at college and the second was Louise Wilson. When I finished my bachelor's degree, I didn't know what I was going to do – whether I wanted a job or if I was going to do a master's. Then I met Louise and she offered me a place with a scholarship on the Saint Martins MA fashion course. What I loved about her was that you always knew exactly where you stood; she would tell you if you looked fat or if she didn't like what you were wearing. There was no beating about the bush with Louise. And what was amazing about her was that she very fearlessly encouraged you to do what you wanted to, not to worry about things, but just to enjoy the moment and what you were doing at college. On the bachelor's course, it never really clicked for me. I was never making work that I really liked, and I wasn't at the top of the class. But I had a much better time on the master's course with Louise, and I felt like we understood each other. When you respect someone like that you strive to make them proud. It is a motivation because you want to do well by her. Also, she was one of those people who would come in the morning and say: 'I woke up last night and I was thinking about those trousers you're making, and I really think you should do this.' The fact that she cared so much it almost took over her life, that was inspiring to me and probably everyone there.

'What I loved about Louise Wilson was that you always knew where you stood; she'd tell you if you looked fat or if she didn't like what you were wearing.'

So, her life was all about these other people she cared about.

Yes, I think so, and it showed in the work and the people who came from that course. She had amazing opinions on fashion and understood it on so many different levels. To be able to understand the work of 10 such different students, and to encourage them down their different paths, is a huge skill. But what made her so inspiring was having someone who cared that much and who made you care about what you were doing.

There's something magical when someone inspires so many people. How did she help you?

She made you realize that nothing is ever finished and nothing is ever complete. Even up to the last minute,

everything is open to change. Just because something took you ages doesn't mean it's great, and because you did something quickly doesn't make it no good. You can rip it up and start all over again. She would make you question your work as well, and that was important. She was strong and strict and, above all, honest, which I think that is very rare in a lot of industries now. So many other voices can tell you things, but they might have an ulterior motive. Louise had a pure voice; you trusted her and you wanted her to trust you. When we were on the course, between students we were all telling stories about Louise. We would go to the pub and someone would say: 'Oh I heard from another student that she did this to them or this.' It all worked to make everyone really care and be there intern for him when I was on my placement year. He is quite community-ish as well, which is something that comes up a lot with me. It was a very small studio, with only one other intern, and when Walter was at the Antwerp Academy he would let us use the studio, as well as at weekends and the evenings. He had the most incredible library and I spent so long educating myself while I was there. I remember when I discovered his work about halfway through my fashion course. At the time in British fashion, it was all very floral, and that idea of dark feminine sexuality, but I never really fitted in with what everyone else was doing. I remember finding his work and that was when I shifted into menswear because he made me realize that fashion could be about anything and come from anywhere. I love and pulling the staples out of things. At weekends, I would help them do up houses and things like that.

You've mentioned that Walter Van Beirendonck never compromises – that leads us nicely to your first collection.[6] A lack of compromise is like you and your approach to fashion. Is that first collection the beginning of your visual resume or is there earlier work that you still consider valid?

There are some house sculptures that I made for my MA collection that I still think are good. I guess that's where it kind of started. The first collection was based around the relationship between workwear and religious wear: one was for a physical function and the other for a spiritual function. It was about the similarities in the utilitarian functions

'My first collection was based around the rapport between workwear and religious wear: one for a physical function, the other for a spiritual function.'

all the time. It was teaching us: 'If you don't care, then why should I?'

And who was your second influence?

He was called Andy Barby and he was why I ended up going into further education in art. He was a teacher at Hendon School and passed away a year after I left, just after I had started at Saint Martins. I remember he taught me one really important thing, which I guess is something you don't realize when you are younger: that it's usually 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration. Just because you have the ability doesn't mean it's going to happen. He instilled in me that hard work is the most important thing.

Do you have fashion heroes or heroines?

My one hero is Walter Van Beirendonck, because I was lucky enough to Walter because he never compromises – and that is an incredible and rare thing in fashion.

The idea that fashion could be anything is interesting.

It didn't need to have a tradition or what my rather naive idea of fashion was at the time. It didn't have to be that. It could be about anything; it could be about you, even if you don't have the most interesting background or childhood, or you weren't drawing dresses from a young age. That was when I started working with wood and sculpture, because my upbringing was all about building stuff. Besides my dad being a plumber, my uncle was a carpenter, and my other uncle was an upholsterer; it was all very physical. My after-school job was dismantling sofas of them both, and the idea of one size fits all. It was my first catwalk collection and the clothes were kind of sexless and almost genderless in some way.

Tell me more about the first collection. It was not only very sculptural, but you erased the face. Where did that come from? It became a cause célèbre in a similar way to certain art shows in the 1990s. How did you deal with the ensuing criticism and the instant fame?

The show was in January 2013. It was a very strange, double-edged time. We had just got a studio and everyone working on the collection was either a friend or family; we did it with almost no money. The fabric was calico, which we washed and painted. The wooden sculptures were just fence panels from B&Q.[7] The whole idea came from an

image I found of an old collection I'd done and I'd scribbled over this person, scratched them out completely. I'd drawn on a photograph, and I just thought, 'Oh wouldn't it be amazing if we could make it look like the person had been scribbled out?' So we literally just smashed up the wooden fences and put them in piles and then joined them together. We then made a replica version of that instant and chaotic energy by painstakingly snapping wood to make it the same as the original version. So, it was almost the idea of replicating something that was not replicable. Then in terms of covering the face or shielding people, our brand is built around the idea of workwear and communal ways of dressing, and there was that idea of protection that runs through everything. That show was really about everyone who helped. It was very much a group effort. I really can't believe we got that collection together, you know. To begin with, I was doing it in my bedroom at my mum's house, and we got a studio halfway through. Then when we showed it and the reactions! When you are young and doing your first collection… I remember thinking: 'Maybe this isn't for me. It's a joke; my work is a joke. Maybe I should do something else.' There was definite doubt.

'I remember thinking: 'Maybe this isn't for me. It's a joke; my work is a joke. Maybe I should do something else.' There was definite doubt.'

How do you pick yourself up after that? How do you get to the next collection?

All the media things were going on over the first collection and people were making it into a joke or being offended by it, and I was kind of shocked that it would get that reaction, especially because so many other things that have happened in fashion are more shocking than that. I just thought the sculptures were beautiful objects to see walking, more than anything else. Maybe it was because it was the first ever men's London Fashion Week,[8] and there was so much more media there, so it got picked up in a different way. But people later helped me see the opinions that really mattered, fashion people who had liked it. Looking back, it was a good thing to split opinion and to make people react, even if they hated it. That's still better than no reaction at all.

Like Walter Van Beirendonck, you did not compromise. So, the next collection…

…was all about chaos and control.[9] It all started with a tie-dye technique that is both controlled and so chaotic that you can never really control the outcome. Everything was hand-dyed. There was this idea of making someone look as if they had been crushed or squashed into a ball. We made the pieces in 3D and then painted the tie-dye onto it, so it looked like a 2D visual from the front, but like a 3D smashed visual from the side. We didn't give in, we just made something more extreme again. This one was more painterly.

That was 2014?

The end of 2013. After that, we didn't do sculpture in the collections. We made these hand-painted rugs on a table with four bags of paint. We were painting them and folding and opening, over and over again. That was kind of obsessive, like things being overly ornate and that romantic idea.

The Spring/Summer 2015 show coincided with the aftermath of Louise Wilson's death. It was a very emotionally charged moment for you and many people in the fashion world. It was like a shockwave.

It was a very difficult time for everyone.

You seemed to capture that moment; there's a sense of mourning in that collection. How did you channel that? Was the collection an homage to your tutor?

I think it probably was an homage. With that show we went from the really painterly, really overworked collection to making everything out of cotton and bare feet. It was all about a minimalism, which I guess is something Louise always stood for. It was a very weird emotional time. I think she passed away a month and a half before, so we were about halfway preparing the collection. I remember the morning of the show, when we got to the venue and John Vial, who does the hair for the shows and was a very close and very old friend of Louise's, mentioned something about her. It was just a weird and emotional day; everyone was upset and started reminiscing. But yes, maybe indirectly, it was an homage to her.

That was our first solo show;[10] the three before that had been group shows with Fashion East. The sculptures in it were very instant; they were just pieces of muslin and we knocked them up like two days before the show. We were walking up and down the street with pieces of muslin and I just loved the way it moved. We were trying to think of the most simplistic way of joining or

adjusting a garment, and that is where all the strings and ties came from. We kind of cinched garments in. They could be tied together in different ways.

It was very architectural and minimalist.
The clothes had an environment around them, in some way. When we were making them, we liked the idea of it being a protest, but a protest about nothing, a silent protest. That was the main idea. Our press releases sometimes sound as if we start from the beginning with these concepts, but it is really about reacting in the studio: 'Oh, that feels nice'; 'I like this piece of fabric'; 'What about this?' And usually there will be 10 failed attempts at things that don't even relate in the end. We just allow it to happen. I guess that comes from Louise Wilson as well. Just because it was the first idea, and you spent ages on it, doesn't make it the right idea.

There is often something of the procession in your collections, an idea of medieval rituals that appeal to all the senses. In some of your collections, there is something almost monastic, with armour and protective shields. I was wondering if there is a connection to the Middle Ages?
I think there is, even in my MA collection. I've always loved clothing that has a purpose and I love religious wear; there is something so beautiful and simplistic about it. So that balance between the two is always like a constant conversation. Sometimes it goes deep into protection and armour, and then even if it starts as workwear, it often ends up feeling spiritual, maybe.

Wearable wooden sculptures and the idea of obscuring the face were back in the most recent collection,[11] but this time with fabrics attached…
That collection, now I look back at it, felt like it was all about time. We were joking around with the idea of past, future, and present, which maybe sounds like an *X-Men* movie.

There was a red and yellow sculpture and a monochrome brown one, which had a very strange sculpture in the middle.
I loved that they looked like doors – or a portal to somewhere – but also that they looked like confession booths. And I like that the fabric in the middle makes it look like if the model layed down he would be like a human seat, but also like a prayer cushion. And there are ropes like they use to swing the incense that swung when they walked. I loved the idea that they looked like scales or some weird balancing thing. I also like the way they look like an ugly clock, a cuckoo clock when they have those hanging pendulums underneath. If you think about it in terms of past, present, future, they would be the past.

And then the future and the present?
The present was a sculpture that looked like you'd photographed a jet-ski from above and then there was the seat and the protective parts of the jet ski. I like that they flapped, like a flying machine or a bird, when the models walked. It looked like they were trying to fly or like a kite. There was an idea of movement and the futuristic idea that they can fly. There was also a sense of naivety, the idea that sometimes knowing too much is negative. The clothes were about that idea of seeing, like maybe seeing a photograph of something and not knowing what it was made of and then trying to recreate it, but in all the wrong materials. It was as if every time we thought of something futuristic it ended up medieval. So at the end of the collection, for example, we had these futuristic shapes that were put onto things, but in fact the shapes were taken from Celtic flags joined together. It was that idea of when you're trying to be futuristic, you end up coming full circle and being medieval.

So there is a medieval connection…
Yes. With the last collection, the line-up of 30 looks was almost the most traditional thing we could think of, but it was also the most futuristic thing we could think of. It kind of came full circle.

So, the past present and future come together.
Yes, like with the idea of movement, of futurism.

And when you say we, who is we?
My team: seven full-time and two part-time.

So when someone is not wearing one of these structures, it becomes a sculpture. I was wondering about this double sense because you started out doing art, then moved into fashion. It's as if you are still doing sculpture.
Yes, I guess so, but what I think is fun about fashion is that there's always a person involved and they have to walk. It's really like problem solving for the body: what it's like being next to it, and how that changes.

'Every time we thought of something futuristic it ended up medieval. We made futuristic shapes that were in fact taken from Celtic flags joined together.'

Obscuring the face was in your first collection and it keeps coming back, like an eternal return in the Nietzschean sense. Where does that come from? Is it connected to giving your models a sense of anonymity or gender neutrality? From early on you've always emphasized the unisex character of your collections.
The core of everything is always based around the idea of communal ways of dress or a group of people who wear the same uniform. Which I guess relates to cults or a work force or a school uniform. I remember when I was a kid and we used to think that a school uniform was really oppressive and we really wanted to express ourselves, but then whenever it came to the no-school-uniform day – when we could wear our own clothing – all the richer kids would show off all their amazing clothing and their fancy trainers, and the poorer kids wouldn't be able to. It was like people were being compared to each other for what they had and judged, when usually, on the days we wore uniform, everyone was equal. That idea of a work force or a group of people goes back to the idea of community. I have an obsession with that and the idea of protection and the idea of how it's not about the individual, but about the group as a whole. That might also be related to obscuring the face in some way.

Did you conceive of the collections as gender neutral from the beginning or did this gradually develop over time?
Whenever we have done things like robes – you might call them skirts for men – there is always that idea that this was, and still is in certain communities, deemed to be men's dress; it's not about a man in a modern women's dress. There is always an idea of masculinity running through everything. It is also about functionality.

There is a lot of debate in the architecture world at the moment about communal living; there is a bigger emphasis on communal space. You talk a lot about communal dressing and that seems to put your work in sync with that movement. It's something democratic because it crosses genders and people…
I've always felt that there is something very romantic about that vision of a group of people all wearing the same kind of dress, because you don't see it very often. People don't even wear suits and ties to the office anymore; you don't see groups of nurses walking down the street. It is something that has been lost. Sub-cultures are different to before; now everything is much more globalized and mixed. It isn't a negative thing; it's just a different era. But I just love that idea of community and a communal way of dressing. I think that goes back to where I grew up, and my crazy mum's house filled with people.

Does your mum come to the shows?
Oh yes, she always comes. She was wearing one of the paradise jackets[12] last time; she loved it. My parents have been very supportive since the beginning.

A uniform can feel very ritualistic. Can we talk some more about rituals?
That idea of the ritual has always been there. At the very beginning of my MA course in 2011, I won a competition to do a shoe collaboration with Bally of Switzerland and the whole collection was based around the original *Wicker Man* film. I've always loved that film and I always look at folkloric ideas of tradition.

Did they produce the shoes?
Yes, once. We hacked up shoes and then put them back together, with cork and leather. Like worker boots mixed up with sandals; those kinds of ideas. We wanted to use natural crepe and rubber.

Have you designed shoes since then?
We did a collaboration this season with Grenson.[13] We wanted to make a shoe that would look like a toy soldier's shoe, That maybe takes us to Spring/Summer 2016, one collection of sculptures that we've skipped. I've always been obsessed with the symbol of a circle. I love horror films, and they draw that protective circle around themselves to stop the bad things coming in. Then there are circles of people. I always look up the meanings of circles. It's the sun and the moon, and I like that it's an equal distance from the centre all the way around. The sculptures in that show were called 'walking operating tables' by someone, because they look like the sheet they put over someone during an operation. There was also the idea of emphasizing the most vulnerable part of the body – like in cartoons, when people die and their souls leave their bodies and fly away. That's what those were about.

'I've always felt that there is something romantic about a group of people all wearing the same kind of dress, because you don't see it much any more.'

so we had all the ridges down the back and the front, like it had been made in plastic. That goes back to the Rachel Whiteread idea of taking something out of a mould.

The first fashion designer I met as a student in the 1980s was Helmut Lang, he told me at the time that he didn't want to open his own shops but infiltrate the existing system. What are the practical and business realities of being a fashion designer? Can you tell me about the economics, the idea of your brand and how you have remained independent?
I remember when we had to write our first business plan. Up until then it was about solving each problem as it came up, and enjoying that things were still happening. Then we had to write what the brand was about and where we stay and who can't terrifies me. I want to decide which decisions I should make; the idea of having to justify my decisions to someone else scares me.

It's your business, but you do work on collaborations. How did the one with Moncler come about? How do these collaborations with bigger commercial brands operate?
When we were first approached by Moncler, I couldn't initially see the similarities between us. I wasn't sure about what we would do. Then I began looking into their history, and it's all about functionality and protection – which is something that we also investigate, but in a different way. When I think of Moncler I always think of that specific shape and about things being solid but as light as air. That's Moncler. We have done working with Moncler is that they have the ability and the factories to do anything. As a young brand, you are working within the constraints of the factories or the suppliers you have around you. Also, Moncler is very open to what I think might be good. They are very open to strange ideas, which is rare.

And then there is the cinema. I am particularly fascinated by your costumes for *Alien: Covenant* and that Ridley Scott noticed your work. How do you go from the catwalk to big screen?
Janty Yates, the costume designer who has worked with Ridley Scott on a lot of his films,[16] tried calling the studio and couldn't get through. So she turned up in her car, knocked on the door and told us: 'I am Janty Yates, here is my card. I'm working on the new *Alien* film and

'I like the idea that one person can look at something and see innocence within it, while another person sees that same thing as sexual or dark.'

wanted it to go, but fashion is so haphazard and things happen and change so quickly that it is very hard to have a plan. You can have a loose plan, for the next six months or so, but it is forever changing. I think maybe that is why people within fashion are so obsessed with change. Fashion is never allowed to rest; it is a never-stop kind of thing. What I love is that I've managed to keep the brand independent, and that allows me to make decisions I feel are right. A lot of the people who work at the brand have been here since the very beginning or have stayed a long time, and it is like an extended family. We spend more time together than we do with our friends and actual family; we work really long hours, every weekend, travelling together. The idea of having someone come in and tell me who can two seasons of capsule collections with them now.[14] In the first, we played with ideas of form and ideas of protection and functionality again, and we looked at down fetishists who dress in multiple layers of feather down and sleeping bags. The collection's shapes ended up looking very Bauhaus in terms of structure; they had solid 'roundedness' about them. Moncler thought it was like a spaceman, someone else called it a poodle man, and then someone had a more sexual reference: they called it anal-bead man. I like that idea that one person can look at something and see something innocent, and someone else sees something sexual or dark, even though it's the same thing.

We recently did a presentation of the project and Skepta[15] came along and wore the pieces. What is exciting about saw some of your pieces. I sent pictures to Ridley Scott, and he is into maybe borrowing some samples to see them in real life, and then maybe we can go from there.' And her dog was barking in the car and she had to run out, and it was all very chaotic. And then I realised that it was Janty Yates who is the Oscar-winning costume designer for *Gladiator*. Later I found out that she had gone to Selfridges to have a look around and had seen our Autumn/Winter 2015 collection. She said that it related to exactly what she had spoken to Ridley about and his ideas for the new *Alien* film, which was kind of a mix between medieval and futuristic. It was the collection where we had the jumper with the hole. Weirdly, when we were doing that collection, we joked about how it looks like the scene when the alien jumps out

of the chest in *Alien*, and then a few months later, we met Janty Yates. So I don't know if there was a weird universe thing going on there. It's funny because I remember watching all the *Alien* films at my best friend's house when we were in primary school, but never did I think that I would even get to meet someone in that world, let alone be a part of the *Alien* legacy. It was such a surreal and exciting thing to do.

We haven't talked about that Autumn/Winter 2015 collection, in which faces aren't obscured, but there are repeated holes.
For that collection, we did T-shirts that looked like scars, and sewing them onto the body to adjust them. We had red looks in the middle of the show and black and white dotted throughout, we also had the paradise ponchos. We began by looking at paradise in an innocent way, until a friend of mine said: 'Oh, but paradise is an aesthetic. It is not a thing – it is a negative idea.' I had never thought about paradise like that before, and we ended up with this idea of darkness and playing with different ideas of paradise.

A dark paradise! It's like an oxymoron.
Yes, a sinister dark paradise. The sculptures for that collection came about from trying to make a weird exercise machine. That idea of going to the gym and the aspiration of making your own ideal body relates to paradise. Some of the sculptures also look a bit like a parrot, a bird of paradise or an animal being dissected. Like a dissected frog when you pull the skin back. And somearound, how would you describe the overall story of your label?**
I always think that each collection is very different, but other people always say they're the same, but twisted. Someone said each one is the story of what it is to be a man. Maybe that is just because even if we try to be very different every time, and find something else, we always come back to one idea.

Like a leitmotif…
Sometimes it is spirituality, sometimes it is about protection, more militaristic, and falling in line. There's always that exploration of the different ways it is to be a man, maybe. Talking about the collections like this makes our process sound really conceptual, but we never start with a concept. We are about reacting and then, as we are building

'People say symmetrical faces are the most beautiful, so I liked the idea of breaking it up, dissecting the body and measuring to test if it's perfect.'

so if you saw the collection lined up, it looked like a striped flag. Janty had seen it and wanted the twisted jersey bodysuit for all the sleepwear in the film.

That was your first cinema experience?
Yes, and it was amazing how many pieces we had to make for the film. Each actor needed 12 of every single one. They were all hand-sewn, so it was a nightmare because you have to put them onto a person to sew them. I think we made like 150 full suits in jersey that had the twists all the way.

We've discussed all the collections…
There is one collection left! The one before last, the multicoloured one based around the idea of paradise, with stretched stripes.[17] The clothes were made out of sportswear jersey, and one said the ropes on them looked like a girl's pigtails as well, which was sinister. The lines started off as pretend talismans. I like the idea of a talisman that is believed to have power, because that's again the idea of striving for paradise. And then there were the ponchos at the end with big patchwork scenes of parrots. I liked the idea that wearing it, you could stand behind someone, and become the backdrop, like when you take a photo in paradise. Also, I liked that the sculptures looked like they were measuring the body. People often say the most symmetrical face is the most beautiful, so I liked the idea of breaking it up, and dissecting the body and measuring to test if it's perfect.

Now we've discussed all your collections, even if we've slightly jumped
the idea, things are all over the place, but then it all weirdly comes together in the end. I like the fact everything is open to interpretation as we build the collection; we're not strict or directive. That's why our show notes are always just a piece of paper with two paragraphs that don't really describe anything, but just set the scene. Because I think it's really interesting to see what other people see in a collection.

Do you ever collaborate with visual artists?
I collaborate on the sculptures with a friend of mine, David Curtis-Ring;[18] we've been friends for a long time. We build sets in the studio together. In terms of visual artists, it's mainly photographers like Dan Tobin Smith;[19] he shot the last campaign. He is an

amazingly technical photographer and is great to work with because nothing is ever impossible. We are working on a campaign that we are shooting next week, where we are burning these huge versions of the Spring/Summer 2018 sculpture. We are making these huge burning effigies outside, all with coloured flames, but we just found out it's going to be minus 10 that day.

How do you typically start a collection? Do you sketch and draw?
I am always drawing things.

You have notebooks?
No, just weird bits of paper that I then fold up and put inside my bag.

And always by hand?
Yes, I do computer drawings because you have to for the factories, but I always think there is something nicer about a handmade drawing. That's where those smashed fences came from.

What about any unrealized projects? Architects publish books about their unrealized projects, but there are rarely books about artists and fashion designers'. Do you have dreams or unrealized projects within or outside fashion?
I've always wanted to do something in architecture. I've always loved ceramics, too; they are so tactile and functional. I love the materials, and the fact that they last forever. I've always wanted to make furniture, too. I think I just love making things. Some of my favourite days are spent just making something in the studio, even if that's really rare now. Fashion is sometimes so overwhelming.

There should be a monographic book of everything that you have done.
We often laugh and say we should do a book of all the terrible things we've made that no one's seen. A book of our failed attempts. We have photos of all of them. Because one day we are like, 'Wow, this is amazing'; then the next, 'This is terrible!' It would be a fun book.

In just a few years, you have created an amazing body of work. You must now have a younger generation of fashion designers looking up to you for advice. What would you say to a Central Saint Martins student now reading this?
I think that inspiring someone is probably the whole reason I went into fashion in the first place. I remember being at Saint Martins and one of my main aims was to be in a book in the library, and for a student to open it and make it part of their research. I think that is such an important thing to do. And for a long time, I wanted to be a teacher. In terms of advice, though: work very, very, very hard and never ask someone to do something that you wouldn't do yourself or are not prepared to do. That is what I have learned and what I have done. You have to dedicate your whole life to it, but if you love it, it doesn't matter, because life is work. It's about devotion.

Which designers of your own generation do you feel a kinship with? A proximity, maybe even a friendship?
One would be Nasir Mazhar; he is an incredible maker, a hat maker and, I think, a sculptor.[20] He's based in London and he's a real creator. He stands by what he wants to do and never compromises. He is completely self-taught and if you ever go to his studio, you'll see that he just makes things through the night and all day. There are lots of half-finished, weird and incredible hat inventions. He is a real genius, I think. Then, Raf Simons is a huge inspiration to everybody. He has a story within his work, which I think is very important, especially with menswear. He paved the way for everyone in menswear. I really like what Simone Rocha does, too.

I had lunch with her recently. She's extraordinary.
She is doing Moncler, too.[21] She is doing the women's and I'm doing the men's. I feel that she creates such incredible work, which has a really clear story as well; it's just amazing. The other people I like in London are all people I feel strongly about, and from what I understand they are all very nice people. That's important to me: working in a way that is respectful and about being kind. Kindness is key for everything – I think it comes across in the work of people who are good.

I think the keys to the 21st century are kindness and also generosity.
Yes. I went to help Nasir for a few months, just before I started on the MA and ever since then he has been very generous with his help, with materials or by teaching me how to make things. Kindness and generosity are so important.

That's a perfect conclusion. Thank you.
Thank you, that was nice.

'Some of my favourite times are spent just making something in the studio, even if that's really rare these days. Fashion is sometimes so overwhelming.'

1. Brownies is the section of the Girl Guides movement for girls aged 7-10 and was originally called Rosebuds. Each Brownies troop is run by an adult referred to as Brown Owl.

2. Rachel Whiteread is a British artist best known for creating artworks by casting the negative space of objects – from stairwells to tables – with concrete, plaster or resin. She was the first female artist to win the prestigious Turner Prize, awarded in 1993 for work including *House*, the cast of the interior of an entire 19th-century house in east London. Completed on October 25, 1993, the monumental sculpture was demolished on January 11, 1994. The leader of the local council, Eric Flounders, which owned the land on which it stood and ordered its destruction, called the sculpture 'utter rubbish'.

3. Swiss artists Peter Fischli and David Weiss (who died in 2012) are best known for their filmed sculptures, such as *The Way Things Go*, in which ordinary objects bump into each to create a falling-domino-style chain reaction. Their work has been much copied in advertising. The exhibition seen by Craig Green was the major retrospective of the duo's work, *Flowers & Questions*, held at London's Tate Modern from October 11, 2006, to January 14, 2007.

4. Lucian Freud (1922-2011) was, alongside Francis Bacon, the leader of the post-war London School of figurative artists. One of the 20th century's great portraitists, he was born in Berlin, the grandson of Sigmund Freud, and fled to the UK with his family in 1933. Around 2002, he was introduced to Kate Moss, and went on to paint her portrait (which later sold for £3.9 million) and tattoo two swallows at the base of her spine. Jenny Saville is a painter who first came to prominence with the group known as the Young British Artists, whose work was bought and promoted by Charles Saatchi in the 1990s. Her paintings and drawings, mainly aggressively fleshy nude portraits, do not attempt to hide their debt to Freud.

5. Louise Wilson was course director of the Fashion Design MA at Central Saint Martins from 1992 to her death, aged 52, in 2014. During her tenure, graduates from the course included Green, Alexander McQueen, Phoebe Philo, Kim Jones and Jonathan Saunders.

6. Green's first collection was Autumn/Winter 2013. The runway show featured models' faces covered by pieces of painted wood and was included in a January 2013 *Daily Mail* article under the headline: 'Is There a Prize for the Stupidest Outfit at London Fashion Week…?' Not content with this first story, the newspaper then sent a reporter around London wearing a replica of the collection's face sculptures. Under the headline, 'You Can't Wear That in Here, You Plank!', the reporter was photographed wearing it while getting on a bus and trying to drink a pint of beer.

7. B&Q is one of the UK's leading chains of home-improvement stores, with 300 branches across the country. It was founded in 1969 and for many years had one of the country's most recognizable advertising slogans: 'Don't just do it, B&Q it.'

8. The men's section of London Fashion Week was created in 2013; the most recent event attracted 46 different designers.

9. Spring/Summer 2014.

10. Tim Blanks began his Vogue Runway review of the show: 'You hear about this thing called a fashion moment – a storm of emotion leaving the audience *verklemmt* and the designer overwhelmed – but the genuine article is rare enough to be an urban myth. Until it actually happens. Which it did today during Craig Green's show.'

11. Green's Autumn/Winter 2018 runway show featured wooden frames holding swathes of fabric with tennis balls in drape latex dangling from them, which were worn in front of the body and part of the face like shields.

12. The 'paradise jackets' are straight-cut, quilted cotton jackets with brightly coloured all-over block patterns of sunsets and palm trees. They have a zip fastening.

13. Grenson was founded by William Green in Rushden, Northamptonshire, UK, in 1866. The shoes are still manufactured in the town, which is 120 kilometres north-west of London.

14. The collaboration is called Moncler C. The first capsule collection was released in September 2017 and featured glossy, black, down jackets and ski suits with adjustable straps across the body; the second, featuring lighter wear for Spring/Summer 2018, went on sale in February 2018.

15. Skepta is a British grime artist, rapper, music producer and activist. He was born Joseph Junior Adenuga in 1982 in Tottenham, north London, to Nigerian parents.

16. Janty Yates has worked on 12 films with Ridley Scott, beginning with *Gladiator* in 2000. IMDb lists her first feature-film credit as a wardrobe assistant on Jean-Jacques Annaud's prehistoric (and largely naked) epic *Quest for Fire* in 1981.

17. Spring/Summer 2018.

18. David Curtis-Ring is a London-based artist, art director and production designer who works in fashion, film and performance. He has collaborated with the Arctic Monkeys and the late Stephen Hawking.

19. Dan Tobin Smith specializes in installation and still-life photography.

20. Nasir Mazhar also designs clothing. His most recent collection was Spring/Summer 2017 menswear, and was described by Vogue Runway as no less than 'an extension of his ongoing development of an almost ceremonially stylized, extravagant sub-variety of sports-technical wear with overtones of bondage and recreational self-constraint'.

21. The collaboration is called Simone Rocha 4 Moncler. The latest collection was unveiled at Milan Fashion Week in February 2018.

Special thanks:
The Atopos CVC collection
Bath Fashion Museum
All sculptures made in collaboration with David Curtis-Ring

‘If you can’t see the clothes, it’s not a fashion photograph.’

Superstylists a generation apart, Grace Coddington and Lotta Volkova meet to trade their secrets, stories and strategies for conjuring up the perfect picture.

By Alix Browne
Illustrations by Jean-Philippe Delhomme

Conspirator, agitator, muse, collaborator, and, yes, not least, the person responsible for putting the clothes on the model, the stylist has over the years come to assume one of the most powerful positions in the kingdom of fashion. You will find one behind most great designers, while photographers lean on them even as they resist their influence. There are former stylists at the heads of more than a few major fashion publications (hello, Edward Enninful and Emmanuelle Alt), and then there is Grace Coddington, who was working with photographers to produce exciting, groundbreaking fashion shoots long before stylists were even called stylists.

Her career began as a junior fashion editor at British *Vogue* in 1967 after a car accident cut her modelling career short. Having worked her way up to

‘When Anna Wintour was at British *Vogue*, she started that whole thing of placing the stylist’s name on the page. We were like, ‘Oh shit, what’s this?’’

becoming the magazine’s senior fashion editor and after a short spell as a creative director at Calvin Klein in 1987, Anna Wintour asked Coddington to join her at US *Vogue*. The pair began at the magazine on the same day in 1988, and together turned it into a stylistic and commercial powerhouse, its scale and influence synonymous with fashion’s broader transformation from insider’s playground into the industrial-scale arena of commerce and entertainment that it remains today. During her long career, Coddington has been an eyewitness to, and key player, in the golden age of print magazines, witnessing stylists move from anonymity to centre stage – her own fame launched by her initially reluctant role in R.J. Cutler’s 2009 documentary *The September Issue* – helping them go from uncredited workers to marquee names.

Names that have reached more recent fashion ubiquity, such as Lotta Volkova, the Vladivostock-born, Central Saint Martins-educated, Paris-based in-house stylist for Demna Gvasalia at both Vetements and Balenciaga. After working for her own label – now on permanent hiatus – and getting her first styling break with photographer Ellen von Unwerth, Volkova met Demna and Gosha Rubchinskiy, with whom she has created a collaboration that goes beyond simply styling and reaches into design, photography, casting and modelling, in the process, further stretching the definition of what a stylist can be. And in a world where digital media have been transforming the way fashion is presented, perceived and consumed, Volkova has shown how powerful Instagram can be in taking a stylist’s vision from the personal to the public.

System brought together these two formidable fashion forces at Coddington’s office in the Chelsea neighbourhood of New York. Coddington was dressed down in black trousers and a charcoal grey sweater with small slits at the wrists; Volkova exuded head-to-toe executive realness by way of Demna Gvasalia. Despite being generations apart, the pair turned out to have many things in common, starting with a love of storytelling and a disdain for being told what to do. They also, rather endearingly, appeared to be somewhat in awe of the other’s work.

Grace Coddington: I was blonde once. It was an absolute disaster because it made my skin look green. It was awful and then I had to wait for it to grow out a little bit.

Lotta Volkova: Oh, wow.

Grace: Red makes my skin look white, which is what I like.

Lotta: It’s the worst when you have hair that you don’t like.

Grace: When I broke up from a marriage, someone said, blondes have a better time. My friend dyed it in the bathroom. It was so painful because it burns your scalp. I liked the idea, and I kept it for about a year.

Lotta: Did you have more fun?

Grace: Not really, no.

Lotta: The worst I ever had was blue. It really didn’t suit me somehow. Dirty blue.

Grace: Black was awful. I had jet black.

Was that the Vidal Sassoon[1] days?

Grace: Actually a lot later – he would never have dyed my hair black.

As stylists, people who think about clothes all the time, do you ever not want to have to think about getting dressed?

Grace: That’s why I think I dress the way I do. I wasn’t always like that; I used to really think about getting dressed when I was younger and had a slightly better body. Now I don’t want to think about clothes. The most I think is how can I trick everybody into not realizing that I’ve put on a hundred pounds? Seriously, it’s about a weight thing. So that is my only concern. I think if my sweater is shorter then my legs look longer – it’s all those little tricks.

Lotta: I hate dressing up every morning. It’s a real struggle.

But you haven’t settled into a look, Lotta. Every time I see you, you have something new going on.

Lotta: I’m always kind of obsessed with certain things. I’m quite an obsessive person, so whether it’s some toy earrings or whatever…

Grace: I get obsessed too, but I project it onto my poor models in the picture because it doesn’t work on me anymore.

Lotta: Sometimes it doesn’t work on me either. I completely understand. I still try!

Grace: Well, you look good in it!

Lotta: Thank you! That’s sweet.

When you are working, do you gravitate toward things that you personally like? Or are you able to separate your personal taste from what you think the shoot or the client needs?

Lotta: For sure, but I had been working for quite a long time before I met Demna. I had been styling for 10 years, since I was quite young. On the scene, in London on the club scene, and making clothes here and there and taking pictures. I studied photography, in fact…

Grace: At Saint Martins.

Lotta: Yes. So I never wanted to be a stylist. I started styling when I came to Paris. I remember working for a long time and feeling quite frustrated because it was hard. I had all these ideas, but people would say, ‘Oh, it’s too much.’ They just wouldn’t go for it. And then I remember I met Gosha Rubchinskiy and Demna, and it was the first time it felt really fun. We were just having fun and exploring ideas: like, ‘Wouldn’t it be crazy if we did this.’ And they went for it. They were into the same

‘When I was younger, I looked really weird. Being pretty was never a priority for me; it was more about exploring extreme looks.’

Lotta: For me, it’s always quite personal. It’s an extension of what I like, what I am, what I’m interested in, and introducing that into my work. Like alternative cultures, talking about music, talking about different lifestyles, different fetishes. I’m for sure projecting what I’m interested in onto what I do.

Grace: I think your approach has actually had a big effect on fashion.

Lotta: Thank you! I find my approach quite old school, to be honest.

Grace: Yeah, but other people don’t.

Lotta: That’s ironic!

You’re considered quite revolutionary.

Lotta: I don’t know, it’s quite natural. I’m into weird stuff. That’s it.

Grace: And you’ve sort of found a perfect fit with Demna, in a way. Or maybe it just looks that way from the outside. things as I was, so it just kind of worked.

Grace: It’s great when two things collide and it clicks.

Lotta: Right, it just clicked.

Grace: That’s when the world really started noticing.

Grace, did you have a similar turning point in your career where suddenly everything clicked?

Grace: No, I think it was much more gradual for me. I’m much older and when I started things moved much more slowly. And in my career everybody was anonymous, whereas now, nobody is.

Everyone is a star.

Lotta: And there are so many people.

Grace: I don’t think anyone even knew who I was until the [*September Issue*] movie[2] came out.

You were always well known in the industry though.

Grace: A few people in the industry knew me. But one never had one’s name credited on the page.

Lotta: Really? That’s interesting.

Grace: It was Anna Wintour who brought that to British *Vogue*. The first thing she did was put everybody’s name on the page. All the stylists. I don’t call myself a stylist; I call myself a fashion editor, but that’s only because I’ve been with magazines now for 50 years. She came into British *Vogue* in 1985 or something like that. We at British *Vogue*, the team there that she kept on, were like, ‘Oh shit, what’s this?’ We weren’t quite sure we wanted our name on the thing. We were never interviewed; even the editor-in-chief of the magazine was never interviewed. Beatrix Miller,[3] the editor-in-chief of British *Vogue* was an amazing woman, but she never did interviews; she didn’t want to. It just didn’t come into the equation. You were just one of those people who worked behind the scenes.

Did that level of anonymity contribute to the magic that was fashion and fashion magazines – as if they just appeared out of nowhere?

Grace: I think so. I’m against this looking into everybody’s closet all the time. Everybody knows everything because everybody Instagrams everything they are doing every five minutes of the day.

Lotta: Guilty as charged!

For the record, Grace and Lotta have both put up their fists and are facing off! [All laugh]

Grace: It's your generation Lotta, and it's what you do. It's fine if you want to do it, I just don't want to do it. I don't see how that is terribly interesting to anybody that I'm drinking a Starbucks or whatever. Back in the day, that kind of looking into people's lives didn't exist. Even the big stars, like Elizabeth Taylor or whatever, the news about them, if they were getting divorced, it was a long time before everyone found out. Whereas now, if someone's getting divorced you know before they do. It's weird!

Lotta: We are missing the sense of freedom that you could be doing whatever.

Grace: Because now you're going to get caught!

Lotta: You had more time to develop, to try things. That's something that is not there any more for sure.

Ellen chose me to style. When I moved to Paris I was sort of struggling. I had had a brand before, a small menswear brand, in London, and when I moved to Paris in 2007,[5] it was hard to keep working in the way that I had been working, which had been much more DIY and easy, very much more underground. And then I met Ellen in a club and she said: 'Oh my god, I love your sense of style, what do you do? Come over, bring some clothes, we're going to do a test shoot.' And I remember going to her house with a pile of vintage stuff and we had two girls who were dressed in lingerie by the end of the day. We had all this cheerleading stuff. It was really fun. And she said we should do more stuff. That's how it started, kind of by accident and definitely because of her. Even if I was styling some stuff on my own for my brand and taking the pictures.

Grace: Wow, a one-man show.

Lotta: Well, when you're 18!

That brings up another good point: when you think about what a stylist is or does, there is no one definition that applies to everyone.

Grace: I hate it when people ask me to define what a stylist is, because I can't. I can say what my approach is, but I can't really define what a stylist is. I'm used to calling myself a fashion editor because fashion editors work full-time for a magazine and can't work for anybody else.

Lotta: That's very different.

Grace: That stopped for me a couple of years ago.[6]

And you've become a stylist!

Grace: I'm not sure I'm a very good stylist; what I want to do is a ton of things.

You and Lotta both do a ton of things.

Grace: That's the interesting thing. The job that I started out doing was very narrow and was only styling shoots or very occasionally, a fashion show. That's a whole new thing. People didn't have stylists helping a designer; it was the designer who did it all.

Lotta: That was something that was introduced in the 1990s.

Grace: Yeah. Well, I'm very old!

Lotta: I was reading your memoirs[7] about when you were a model and had to bring and do your own make-up and hair, and carry the accessories and the big bag of shoes and stockings. It's impressive how the industry has changed in that way!

Grace: Now, you just arrive with dirty hair, looking rough and someone works some magic.

Lotta, what's your idea of being a stylist?

Lotta: It's collaborating with a photographer on image-making. I do my own casting a lot of the time; it depends on the shoot or magazine, of course. Sometimes the photographer is the starting point and you try and interpret their work or it's the model, a character, and you try to tell a story. It really depends on the situation. And then, of course, I work on fashion shows and consult for brands. And that has added a very powerful status to being a stylist. You become more influential in that sense and the job has changed in that way. It's true that there are quite a few stylists consulting and working on brands.

'Before Vetements happened, I remember I felt that whenever I went to a fashion event or job I had to dress up, you know, put on heels.'

So here is a question for both of you: what was the first story that you had your name on as a stylist or editor? Do you remember the first time you saw your name in print?

Grace: It was probably a rather boring story in British *Vogue*. And that was the 1980s, which was not really my moment. There are other stories since then that I'm happy my name was on and there are times when I say take my name off. They never will, but at times I don't like something I've done, and quite often I don't.

Lotta: For me, I think it was the second shoot I did as a stylist, with Ellen von Unwerth for *Sang Bleu*, a magazine about tattoo culture.[4] I cast a whole bunch of girls and we went to this rockabilly bar north of Paris and shot all these girls in Alaïa and lots of leather.

Grace: Every show seems to have one now.

Lotta: Yeah, but there are still a lot of designers who don't have stylists, who do everything by themselves. Like Alessandro [Michele] at Gucci and Hedi [Slimane] before. But I think it's about whether you want or don't want an opinion from the outside. Sometimes it's important or useful to have someone come in and look at a collection a few days before the show and collaborate with you on how to put it together. Whenever I do shows, it's a collaboration between the designer and the stylist.

Grace: I think that's what we both are – a collaborator. I mean personally, I don't like working on my own. I like collaborating with someone.

Lotta: Me, too.

I should do my own thing. But I'm not really interested in that.

Grace: People have said to me, 'You should go be editor of *Vogue*.' Noooo! [Laughs]

Lotta, when people say 'your own thing' does that mean you should design a collection and get all the credit, or start your own magazine?

Lotta: I don't know. They have different interpretations. I did my own brand when I was young so I've kind of signed off on that.

Grace: When you are young, nothing is better than you. You're brilliant!

Lotta: It was quite a whirlwind that I got myself into back then, to be honest. And I learned so much from it. Basically, I learned how to organize myself. In the beginning, it was very random and all over the place and very chaotic, which was kind of fun, but then you realize you have to deliver!

Chaos can get exhausting after a while.

Grace: It makes me feel sick actually.

Lotta: I am quite comfortable with it! I really admire people who have their own brands, but it's not something that I am interested in for the moment. Things may change, but…

Sometimes it's better to be able to come in and do your magic and leave, and not have to be responsible for all the other things.

Lotta: I've never been at a magazine full-time. I have a couple of titles here and there, but it's always freelance. Maybe that's something I'd like to try one day. We'll see!

Grace: But where? There's no money in magazines any more. That's the sad thing.

Do you think magazines still hold the same status as they did in the past? Does doing a story for a magazine still mean more than styling a show or a campaign?

Lotta: For me, it's still very important. I love magazines. I love the press. I love books. I love buying magazines, and not the same ones every month. Every time I go to a store, if there is something I like, I buy it. It's important to have this printed object in your hand. I like to look through pages and read real books, put a bookmark there or underline things. I'm quite materialistic in that regard.

Grace: It's so nice to hear that from you, as part of the digital generation. It's really a struggle for books. I made a real point of wanting my memoir to be something that was a pleasure to hold and turn the pages of. That to me was as important as the story.

Lotta: You are a stylist after all!

Grace: I love magazines, absolutely love them. Until the day they die I will love them and feel that that's the only place I can really truly express myself, even if there are many things going into a shoot that you can or can't control. It's the closest thing I've got to being able to express what I feel I can contribute to – this sounds a bit big-headed – the world. But pictures I think are important to the world.

It makes total sense to hear you say that, because I think of you first and

'You book five days and by the time you get on the plane, it's whittled down to three; then the model has a job the next day, so you end up with one shoot day.'

Grace: No matter what it is. Even if I'm doing my drawing, almost. It's a conversation. And that is what I miss about not being full-time at a magazine. You could nip around the corner to the next office and there was always someone to have that conversation with. When you are on your own, you can't. You are endlessly calling people to have a discussion with, but you can't get hold of them because nobody ever answers their phone these days. So then you feel very lonely and it makes you feel a little insecure, I think. The greatest thing is collaborating, when you feel that moment when you're both driving toward the same thing. It's very exciting.

Lotta: And it takes your work or the project to another level. I've done my best work when I was collaborating with people. A lot of the time, people tell me

foremost as a storyteller.
Grace: Somehow it seems people don't want storytelling any more.

They no longer have the attention span for it.
Grace: That's the problem. I still labour on and say I see it as a narrative, which always gets a big sigh and 'Can you just get out and do the pictures?' But I always have to have a narrative.
Lotta: I like to have a narrative, too. Sometimes it's like an abstract narrative.
Grace: The reader doesn't have to understand the story; it just gives you a reason. Ellen von Unwerth is an amazing storyteller, and the narrative just grows as you go along. We always used to put her daughter into every story or whoever was there.

peg because otherwise I'd be back right where I'd started and I don't necessarily want to be there. The only thing I could think of was to stick a sneaker on her and ruffle the hair and make her look a bit of a mess.

It was like you doing Corinne Day.
Lotta: Who shot it?
Grace: Craig McDean.

Maybe Craig was channelling Corinne Day. There was a mattress on the floor and for me that's British *Vogue* and Corinne Day.
Grace: I had all these very over-the-top romantic clothes, there was a lot of romance in the last collections. I took one of my favourite red heads, Natalie Westling, but I decided she looked too sweet in all those pretty pretty clothes,

play which role, and it was so much fun to do. We shot for nearly a week in Paris and even then we didn't get it all done.

Can you imagine having a week to shoot?
Grace: And Annie went to Paris a few days in advance to check out all of the locations, check the light. You don't even get a pre-light day anymore.
Lotta: I think it's important to take your time, to spend time. It doesn't just all come in one day. Whenever I shoot I try to have a minimum of two days. Whenever we go on a trip, and I shoot quite a lot in Russia or Ukraine or the States, I try to secure five days – but it's always really hard. It's always a fight.
Grace: You book five days and by the time you get on the plane, it's whittled down to three and they haven't told you

'People tell me I should do my own thing. But I'm not interested in that. Then other people have said to me, 'You should go be editor of *Vogue*.' Noooo!'

Lotta: I think spontaneity is also quite important, to be able to act in the moment and take it somewhere. I never prepare looks in advance actually. Do you prepare looks?
Grace: Oh, no.
Lotta: Me neither. Just do it all on the spot.
Grace: I sort of say, do I have a shoe that will go with that outfit? Just give me the runway one so I'm covered. But then I'll take, say, six pairs of sneakers.

I noticed it was all sneakers in that story you just did for British *Vogue*.[8]
Grace: That was the old lady being modern. Edward [Enninful][9] looks at me and thinks of old British *Vogue* and how I was always doing romantic stories and that, 'Grace is so romantic', so I had to do something that just took it down a

so we had to toughen up the photograph. We were working in the studio with back projection due to a small budget – unlike the old days where money was no problem and one had plenty of time to figure it out.
Lotta: Big budgets! That's something I unfortunately missed!

They are not always good.
Grace: No, but they did allow me to do some things that I think are quite memorable, like the *Alice in Wonderland* story I did with Annie Leibovitz.[10] I could not do that today.

Each dress customized for the story. Every big designer on the planet playing a part.
Grace: We planned it for months. Endless meetings about casting, who would

that the model has actually got a job the following day millions of miles away and in the end, you shoot it in one day. I always think girls look better if they've been able to rest; I'm better if I can rest.

We talked about spontaneity, but there has to be a balance between planning everything out and flying by the seat of your pants.
Grace: I don't think spontaneity has to do with time; you need time for spontaneity as well. In fact, maybe more time. If you've put it all together, you can just have your assistant dress the person.
Lotta: Oh no, I could never do that.
Grace: But most people do.
Lotta: So I've heard! [Laughs]
Grace: I always get in the dressing room, less recently because I can't walk very well, but normally, I'm the one

tugging the thing on. There is a relationship you have with the model and it's a moment where you can say, 'For God's sake, show the front of this dress no matter what the photographer says to you! Don't let him turn you around!'
Lotta: Interesting! I never tell models that. That's a good tip! I tell the photographer but sometimes that can become overpowering.
Grace: Because if the photographer thinks you're telling him what to do…
Lotta: It can get a bit tricky.

Jedi mind tricks.
Grace: If you see the girl edging away from what you wanted, you just catch her eye…
Lotta: That's such a good tip!

What are some of your other stylist secrets? Or your five rules of styling?
Lotta: First rule is to break the rules.
Grace: Don't listen to what you've been told beforehand; it kills you. You might end up deciding to do exactly what you've been told beforehand, but you have to start afresh each time.
Lotta: I find that quite challenging sometimes. Being told by the magazine, being told by the advertisers… I'm a quite responsible person, so I feel a responsibility to do what I've been asked to do. But you're right, sometimes it creates a weird cloud over everything. It really blocks your creativity.

Grace: With *Vogue*, I think you have to be very responsible, but I just feel I have been so much part of that magazine for so long that it is second nature not to do something stupid. I have to go by my own instincts in a way. I sometimes do see it through Anna's eyes and then I get confused, but I have a great sense of responsibility. It's funny because when I became a freelancer, I became aware of all the things you can't do at *Vogue*, like shoot in black and white, and there are lot of girls you can't work with. And I was like, 'Shit, I don't know how to do this.' It was weird when you have the freedom; sometimes it's good to have guidelines or restrictions.

Something to push against.
Grace: Yes, you do have to have something to push against. Sometimes, at some of the independent magazines, you can't see the clothes at all. I always go on about this, but if you can't see the clothes in a fashion photograph, then it's not a fashion photograph. It is as simple and as clear as that. I keep quoting myself on that because I think it's true. It doesn't mean it's a bad picture, some people perhaps don't need fashion photographs in their magazines.

Where do you stand on that, Lotta?
Lotta: I like to make images; I'm very interested in photography in general.
Grace: Me, too, but I love fashion photography; it is just much more difficult if you have that challenge of having to show the clothes, while creating a picture that doesn't look like an ad. To try and make that combination is a very narrow line.
Lotta: I like it when a picture looks real.
Grace: There are plenty of real situations when you can see the clothes and that is the conversation.
Lotta: For me, it is not a necessity. For example, when I worked for independent magazines, you would go on a trip and just take pictures with a photographer and models, almost randomly, and you ended up putting a lot of still lifes in the layout. Of course, you have to cover certain credits, but I am a bit freer in that process, so if you just see a corner of a shirt, then that is fine with me.
Grace: That is not fine with me at all!
Lotta: I am easy with that. The most important thing is the image, the picture; I am not that interested in fashion to be honest.
Grace: I am very interested in images, too. And that is the difficult thing, to try and do both.
Lotta: We always try to do both, we have to in a way, but I am open to using other types of images that don't have that much fashion. You can have a vintage tank top or something.
Grace: That's fine, we just don't do that at *Vogue*, but that's fine.

Lotta, it's interesting to hear you say you are not that interested in fashion.
Lotta: Not really. I've never really been.
Grace: If you dress the girl, like *really* dress her, and you love the look and you are obsessed with it – and as you said before that you get obsessed, I get obsessed, we both get obsessed – and then the photographer does it as a head shot, how do you feel?
Lotta: No, no no no! That is a no. I do communicate to the photographer that it has to be a full-length picture if it is an important look, if it is an advertiser, and then he has to get it. I say that even if it is not always true.
Grace: I say, 'That's my favourite look', because I have seen what's he got is not what I am looking for and I can't see what I need to see. I remember photos with Bruce Weber. The girl would look fabulous and everyone would be very happy and he would start shooting. Then before you know where you are, there are 10 boys and 16 dogs on top of her. So I start crying, 'Bruce, this is my favourite dress!' And then everything stiffens up – and I realize I've ruined his picture.
Lotta: I know what you mean. I communicate to the photographer, 'OK, this is one of the most important looks of the story; it will set up the whole fashion theme and a direction, so it has to be done in a certain way.' I mean, I am lucky enough now to work with people who respect what I do and will listen to me, so it is more of a collaborative process. Sometimes if a photographer has deconstructed an image from what it was originally, but when I step back and see where he has taken it, and it is really strong and interesting, then I will go with it. I will try to work my way around it and see where we can go.
Grace: Yes, but you still come away a little upset.
Lotta: If the final product is good, then that is fine with me.
Grace: But the trouble is it doesn't stop there because it is all in the editing as well.
Lotta: I am quite lucky because I work with people I really trust and I really like and we communicate on the final edit, on the layout. I think they are allowed to have their say, too.
Grace: That's a world I don't know. Because, I mean, it's new-ish that a photographer sends in only one option per picture; 20 years ago, they had to send in a choice of 20 options.
Lotta: I find that a bit tricky.
Grace: Oh, it was awful because inevitably something would be chosen that was not the way they saw it. So, on one hand it is better now, but on the other hand…
Lotta: We try to be quite strong about that: this is what we want to do, take it or leave it. It's perhaps a weird way of thinking, but it is also important. A lot of the times you work on an editorial, it is for free, so it is supposed to say what you really want to do, your point of view and the photographer's point of view …

But if you trust the editor who assigned the story to you, aren't you open to their art direction and opinion?
Lotta: I don't know; to be honest, I think the important person is the person who is on set, who had the real idea, the photographer. They are artists and that is the whole point of doing it.
Grace: Yes, and it is a collaboration, so he takes your baby and changes it in the layout… It would be nice if your opinion was sought in the layout, but often it isn't. With independent magazines, I find there is more collaboration, that is the joy of working for them. They send you the layout day by day and then say, 'We had to get rid of a picture for this reason or another', and they do absolutely involve you. They have to really because you are doing it for free!

There is a balancing of power there…
Lotta: When we work for some of these magazines, we don't just work for free, we actually pay for the shoots with our own money. I don't mind, but I have invested money and so I want it to be what I wanted it to be, and they kind of respect that. You are telling them that is the way it has to be. Often with magazines, I don't even discuss the idea, we just go for it. I always have a strong idea and who I want to shoot it with, and where and in which way. I really like the fact you can just go off and do what you want and then you kind of regroup.
Grace: But if you are involving your own money in that… It is so weird how much one needs for a shoot. It is almost like how long is a piece of string? I remember when I worked at British *Vogue*, there was literally no money, no budget, everything was free. You would borrow a table or take it from your own home because you knew they didn't have exactly what you wanted, and it would just cost you a few taxi cabs. I remember going to Africa for three weeks with David Bailey and I spent £20. And that was mostly buying cigarettes, and then at the other end I have worked at American *Vogue* where the budgets would sometimes run to significant sums, not any more, and it was incredible. When I learned that independent magazines expect the stylist to invest their own money, I was horrified.
Lotta: It's a balance – but that is why it has to be exactly what you want it to be.
Grace: For the kids starting out, it's tough. Because they don't have the money.
Lotta: If you don't have whole agencies and production companies involved, you can do things very low key and very cheap. For example, Harley [Weir] and

'If you try to work with any of the bigger photographers now, they are so used to having 15 location vans and the best lunch thing...'

'You say to the model: 'For God's sake, show the front of this dress no matter what the photographer says to you! Don't let him turn you around!''

I went to Russia about five years ago[11] and we would go and stay in a cheap hotel and get all our friends to come and help. Then we'd go out to party and see models that night who would feature…
Grace: But that was exactly how my life was at British *Vogue* back in the day. But if you try to work with any of the bigger photographers now, they are so used to having 15 location vans and the best lunch thing…

But when did that change? For some magazines that has never been the norm. When did others start to get so enormous?
Grace: In the 1990s, that whole thing, the glut and everyone competing and models' prices skyrocketing.

Linda Evangelista not getting out of bed for less than $10,000 a day. Or was it $15,000?
Grace: We thought it was a joke, but it was a reality. I remember working with a young model doing pictures for Calvin Klein and at the end of the shoot, I had to sign her model-release form and because it was a Sunday she was paid $15,000 for the day and I almost fell over. When I got paid, and Calvin said to me, 'How much do you want?' I said, 'Oh well, if you like the pictures pay me something, but if you don't, that's fine'. And he was really nice, and I can't remember how much I got in the end, but it was quite a lot and I was shaking. And he said, 'I think you had better take it in cash back home with you.' So, I stuffed it in my knickers and flew back to London. It was hysterical. But I was so shocked by what he thought was a normal amount of money to pay me. He paid my air fare and hotel obviously, and I was expecting I would get £100 maybe, but it was certainly a lot more than that! It was hysterical because I was literally shaking; I was crying and in shock, but it put my kid through school. I think it was probably 1983.

Back then, were there other stylists you were aware of doing this kind of commercial work?
Grace: In the 1980s, *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* were very competitive as to who could offer the biggest deal. Suddenly, it was crazy money; there were limousines, and jets flying everywhere.
Lotta: I think there were also fewer people in the industry then.
Grace: There were no independent magazines. I mean there was *i-D*, *The Face* and *Details*, but that was like a little Village magazine that no one outside of New York saw. It is extraordinary how it's boomed and boomed back again...
Lotta: When you work with young designers, you hardly ever get paid, but I think it is important models get paid well for what they do, models especially because…

Writers are not getting paid much either!
Grace: Writers hopefully have a long life, but models don't.

Both of you modelled…
Lotta: Not professionally, never ever. Nothing compared.

You walked in shows.
Lotta: Yeah, but only when we didn't have enough models or a friend asked me. When I was younger, I looked really weird. Being pretty was never a priority for me; it was more about exploring extreme looks for me.
Grace: Me, too. When I was modelling, you arrived with your look. Your Vidal Sassoon haircut or whatever. And I was chosen because I had a Vidal Sassoon haircut not because I was Grace Coddington, because no one knew who Grace Coddington was. There was a newspaper that once a year used to publish a top-10 model article and I was always number 9, or maybe 10, but you know there was Jean Shrimpton and all those girls. It was totally English, so it didn't come across to America and we didn't compete with the girls here. So number nine was pretty far down the line. But it was also because I was a little bit cool in those days: I half lived in Paris and half in London, and I always came back with all the latest accessories from Paco Rabanne or Dorothée Bis or Emmanuelle Khanh. I was booked for that as much as myself.

Lotta, is it hard for you to even imagine a time when things were slow and anonymous?
Lotta: Fifteen years ago when I arrived in London and I was studying at Saint Martins, we were a few friends making clothes to go out to parties and doing photo shoots to document the way we looked, but it wasn't on a professional level. That is the difference; we were just having fun, being free, exploring and experimenting on an underground scene, but it wasn't in *Vogue*. It wasn't on a professional level.

'Back in the day, if stars like Liz Taylor were getting divorced, it was ages before everyone knew. Today, if someone's getting divorced you know before they do.'

Grace: My underground was *Vogue*, even as a model.

We touched briefly on reality and pictures being based in reality. I look at both your work and there is an element of fantasy connecting the two of you. This idea of storytelling, sort of being outside of reality…
Grace: Right now, I am very much inside reality. If the moment is about everything being mundane, then I want to do that. Right now, that is what I want to do; I don't want to do fantasy. I did a bit of a fantasy story the other day, but it turned into that for 15 different reasons. I wanted it in a flower garden and we didn't have any money, and it's hard to find a flower garden because we're in the middle of winter, so we built a flower garden in a house. It was with Steven Klein,[12] so it went 10 stages on and it became crazy. But I have also done stories with him that I've been very excited about, which have been very mundane and real. I like that it was a woman, her kids and her husband reading a newspaper. I like that kind of reality; I'm not too into street reality.

What is your relationship to reality, Lotta?
Lotta: What you find fantasy in my work is just a different reality.

For you, it's your reality because it's not mine?
Grace: Like crazy dressing is fantasy, but to that person, it is probably not fantasy.
Lotta: We talk about different sides of underground culture and stuff like that, so for me, it is sort of pretty real. That is my role in the industry, to talk about those things; it is not necessarily fantasy, because it actually exists.
Grace: I love the idea of documentary; I love documentary movies. I think they are very interesting and I wish I could work with documentary photographers, but as soon as you put your model in there, it is no longer documentary. And they don't know what to do with it, because they are not used to directing anybody, so you can't.
Lotta: I read in your memoir about that photographer when you were still a model, shooting for either *Vogue* or *Elle*. There was a documentary photographer and you were walking around the square and you couldn't find the photographer, and you came back so confused…

Sounds like something Hans Feurer[13] would have done.
Grace: No, it was much much earlier, in the 1960s… It was Saul Leiter.[14]
Lotta: I love that – you didn't know he was there?
Grace: He was a really famous guy and I was so excited to work for him and we got dressed in the dressing room in Vogue House and they said, 'He is outside in Hanover Square, just go out there and turn left.' So, I went outside and walked around the square and couldn't see him anywhere.

And he'd done the whole shoot?
Grace: There was no fashion editor with me because I guess, she didn't want to be in the pictures. So I came back upstairs and said I couldn't find him. And they were like, 'He's done!'

So, where was he?
Grace: I don't know.
Lotta: Mystery.

That is such a good idea. Genius.
Grace: Back in the day, there were those documentary photographers, even Frank Horvat[15] in a way was documentary. I worked with him a bit. We felt it was very documentary because what he did was strip the girl down, not as much as we do now, but it was new in those days. In the 1950s, everyone was so covered with makeup and hair was so done, and he just wanted the girl to walk in as she was, with no make-up on.

That must have been so revolutionary.
Grace: It was because you had to pull off your 15 pairs of eyelashes and uncover yourself. He did these pictures, which were very raw and beautiful. And he used a 35mm camera, which was newish at the time.

What are your perspectives on where fashion is in terms of its power within wider contemporary culture? There are certain periods when fashion and fashion imagery are a driving force and I feel like we have been through a phase when fashion really didn't have a lot of power or a lot to say. But now we are starting to get back into a period in which fashion feels more relevant and somehow more connected to the culture.
Lotta: I find it very relevant and very powerful; it has a strong voice these days. Almost even more than art in a sense because it is really influenced by culture and what is going on around.

'Becoming a freelancer, I became aware of all the things you can't do at *Vogue*, like shoot in black and white, and there are lot of girls you can't work with.'

Grace: It is totally influenced by culture, yes.
Lotta: I find a lot of artists' work is about closing yourself in your bubble, while in fashion, people really collaborate a lot more. That makes it really influenced and influential in that sense.
Grace: I am struggling with it at the moment. My feeling is that it is coming back round from being so extreme to being a little more whatever normal is. And it is walking away from that sneaker-undone-no-make-up-no-hair kind of thing. I feel like it is just cleaning up a bit; it had got to such an extreme place where walking around with jeans with holes in, which I hate. I think you have to be a little more aware of how you dress.
Lotta: I am talking more about gender, for example, which is being highly explored now in shoots. Fashion has become a bit more political.
Grace: It has become very political.
Lotta: It is talking about strong actual subjects, like recently, the idea of beauty has changed and people are starting to work with different types of models with different shapes, trans models and so on. That is not very new, but it is something that has been going on a lot more over the last five years, and that is important.

I was talking with other fashion people about how we are in this era of inclusivity, but size seems to be the last barrier. We can have all genders and races…
Grace: But the clothes have to fit!

So that is fashion's problem.
Grace: If you are using a sample size, you have to really think it through. It has to be a sample that fits her and doesn't make her feel bad when she is being photographed because she can't breathe in it or whatever.

But fashion is so slow to address these hinge moments, and there have been moments, even this season; I think in McQueen there was a larger model, but only one.[16]
Grace: I think she does it really well at McQueen actually, Sarah [Burton]. She did it in the show the season before, too and the girl looked really gorgeous. Fit her in where she fits in, don't force it for the sake of it.
Lotta: We have been using girls, boys and trans-people for Vetements shows. For me, the most important thing was their character and look. Then we worked around the body type. We were flexible.

'Everyone said what I was doing in fashion was revolutionary. But, you know, I come from Russia and revolution is a very big word for us!'

Grace: Yes, but you were making the clothes, too, so you could do it.
Lotta: And there is more room there.
Grace: Try and do that at Chanel! It won't work there.
Lotta: It has to make sense, absolutely. But then it became like a trend, the street-style model, alternative faces, and everybody started trying to put them in their shows.
Grace: It was strange. Everyone thought how fabulous, but if you push it where it doesn't belong then that sometimes defeats what you are trying to do.
Lotta: Exactly, like the snake that bites its own tail. It is good that people started…
Grace: It is great that all people are included but make the story work for them.
Lotta: Yes, absolutely.

Here's a question: what did you never anticipate happening in your career but which ultimately did? What surprised you?
Grace: Generally, having recognition. I never thought I would have that; I thought I would be the way I was, 20 years at *Vogue*, just a fashion editor, unrecognizable continuously, apart from to a few insiders.

And it changed because of *The September Issue*?
Grace: Yes, how that changed my life! The doors it opened. I wouldn't have any work now if it weren't for that; I wouldn't have the books. It is insane.

Do you think that's true?
Grace: I do. It wouldn't have occurred to me to do them even. Because who am I? Now I am constantly recognized; I don't do much to hide. I keep saying I am going to dye my hair or cut it off, but then I don't. I have tried tying back my hair, but people still recognize me. I would never have thought of becoming a little bit of a celebrity, because I am so not that person really. Although I have grown into it a bit, because you have to, otherwise you go mental.

I think celebrity comes so naturally to the current generation…
Lotta: Well, everyone wants to know everything about everyone and it's all very exposed. I do think it is quite natural, Grace. A lot of people in fashion knew about you; you are such a legend and have done so many things. To be honest, I think you are putting yourself down a bit on that level.

It is funny when it crosses over into mainstream culture.
Grace: I didn't want to be in that movie. I did everything I could *not* to be in that movie – and I wasn't just being coy or anything. I really just didn't want to be there. It got in the way and it was annoying to have cameras come in when you were doing a shoot. I could not stand it. I remember when I worked for Calvin briefly and cameras started coming backstage and I threw them all out. I said, 'Get out of here, it's a dressing room!' You were trying to put the show together and Carrie Donovan[17] from the *New York Times* and her cameraman were there. I was like, 'Get out!' Then Calvin came in and said, 'Did I hear that right?' And I said, 'Yes, they were in the way.' So he said, 'Do not throw out the *New York Times* photographer!' Now, of course, there are thousands of them, while those poor models are getting changed.
Lotta: I had a moment shouting at photographers backstage at the Mulberry show the other day in London because they were taking pictures of the girls half-dressed, not even properly checked. I thought, 'What is the point of these pictures? These are house pictures, the clothes don't look good.' But the photographers were so aggressive and violent, and they wouldn't leave. People don't really respect it.
Grace: People have always said, 'Come on, let's film you on the shoot', and I say, 'No, you fucking won't!'
Lotta: I am against that.
Grace: I am so against that. When they were making that film, they kept saying, 'We are coming on your shoot', and I kept saying, 'No, you are not.' But in the end, I had to give in because I was told to.

But you got something out of it.
Grace: I got a lot out of it. One often wonders which way one's life would have gone had it not happened. But I would not have predicted it. A friend of mine said at the time: 'Wait until that film comes out – your life will change.' And I was like: 'Pull the other one.' But the day that film came out, I walked out of my front door and everyone started recognizing me, it was so hilarious.

What was your big surprise, Lotta, or have you not had one?
Lotta: I think in a way when I became a bit popular and everyone said it was revolutionary.
Grace: But it was.
Lotta: Well, you know, I come from Russia and revolution is a very big word to us!

Yes, that's true.
Lotta: It changes lives and I was like, here it doesn't.
Grace: I'm too American.
Lotta: We talked about subjects that have always existed, underground culture and stuff, but I guess it was a change and people started looking at fashion in a different way.
Grace: I remember people saying that it was quite shocking. I guess I missed the Vetements show because of times or something, but someone said, 'You have to go see Vetements.' So three or four of us trooped over to some dive off the beaten track in Paris. And you walked in, it was completely black, you couldn't see anything, and I nearly fell down the steps. We are American *Vogue* and no one said, 'Grace, would you like a cup of tea?'
Lotta: Oh, you went to the showroom![18]
Grace: And I am looking at all these terrible-looking clothes and thinking, 'What the hell is this? This is not me.' So I walked out.
Lotta: [laughs] That is so funny.
Grace: No one bothered to say 'Let me put it on and show you.'

Maybe that was part of it, part of the attitude. But Grace, you must have had that kind of experience in the 1990s? Finding young designers, going to Margiela? The equivalent in other generations. Even an early McQueen.
Grace: I kind of grew up with McQueen and Galliano, and you [Lotta and Vetements] were on the same wavelength. This was a generation much younger than me, so it was really strange after we had been Chanel-ified for years. It is one thing if you see it in the independent magazines and it is people like you putting it together, using vintage and Chanel; it is something else if the whole show is that. And of course, Margiela wasn't really that, I don't think.

But the spirit of it maybe was.
Grace: The spirit, maybe.
Lotta: Before Vetements, I remember I felt like whenever I went to a fashion thing I had to dress up, you know, put on heels.

You are wearing heels today!
Lotta: I do like wearing heels I must say.

'So much of my energy is spent digging my heels in, and saying, 'No, I'm doing it this way!' But then if there's a backlash about it, you have to be a bit punk.'

Every time I see you, you are in heels!
Grace: And I dressed down for you!
Lotta: [laughs] I love that! After working on Vetements with Demna and Gosha, I felt so confident to be in whatever felt right in the moment. If you didn't feel like dressing up or being pretty, you could wear a black hoodie and big oversized coat and trainers, and you could go to the show like that. It was just OK, and people were doing that. So I think in a way that is something that they changed.
Grace: That was a breakthrough.
Lotta: You could be anything you wanted to be.

My greatest moment in fashion was when it became fashionably acceptable to wear Birkenstocks! I wore them every summer and then they were fashion, and suddenly I could wear them to the office.
Lotta: Fashion should be about who you want to be.

But some people don't know who they are, and they look to fashion to tell them…
Grace: …or to describe them. That is the thing. You should just wear whatever comes from your heart.

The thing I really loved about fashion in the 1990s was that it felt like you could find a designer and identify with them. I was a big Helmut Lang, Jil Sander kind of person; when I found those clothes I thought, 'This is who I am.'
Grace: Are you still that person or did you change?
I am still that person.
Grace: I changed a lot. I flipped from being Kenzo – I wore only Kenzo for a long long time – to only Saint Laurent ready-to-wear – the real Saint Laurent – and then only Azzedine. And then it was all Calvin Klein, it was all or nothing. Recently, it's been all Céline.

Now what?
Grace: I don't know.
Lotta: I had a very strong Westwood moment in London. I feel like she is a designer with such a strong identity and you buy into the whole mentality.

But when you were wearing it, did you feel like 'this is who I am' or 'I am wearing Westwood'?
Lotta: I think I adapted it to who I was; I mixed it up more in a punk way.
Grace: I just adopted the entire look. I was boring; it was easy.
Lotta: These days it feels quite different. There is less loyalty and it's because a lot of brands are doing similar things to each other.
Grace: Copying each other.
Lotta: If one trainer sells well, then another brand will do another version of that trainer. It's all marketing, with most brands, and even young designers.
Grace: Very much young designers because they cannot go out on a limb.
Lotta: For people outside of fashion, it is less obvious, but for us, when you look at certain brands, you understand what they still stand for and you can ignore this moment. For people outside, they won't see so much of a difference between brands.

I think that is how people think these days. You are bombarded by images and information, so you compile what you like out of what influences you. You aren't just into one thing; you have many different interests; you like many different brands. You buy a pair of shoes here, a dress there, and a jacket from somewhere completely different. I just think that is how it is these days. So it is not very designer driven and not very coherent in that sense. It is deconstructed in a way.

Do you remember a time when fashion was not accessible, I mean visually, pre-Internet days, when fashion shows were only accessible to buyers, editors and the friends of the designers?
Grace: That was so good – and then all the bloggers came and kicked us out of the front row!

Beyond that very immediate effect of the floodgates opening up, how do you feel this, democratization is maybe too big a word, has changed things? We the editors used to control the flow of information, and we would see a collection and say this is what is important from that collection. Now magazines don't have that power because everyone else has their own opinion and a platform on which to express it. What effects has that had on the fashion landscape and your work personally or professionally as a stylist? Are you now contending with these other opinions?
Grace: No, I'm not. I am just carrying on doing my own thing because I cannot compete with the younger generation. I cannot compete with the whole digital thing because it doesn't interest me. Obviously, it is what it is and it is very

'I still get obsessed with certain style things, but these days I project them onto the poor models because they don't work on me anymore.'

strong and important, but it is not part of my world. My world is still carrying on doing what it does, loving fashion, doing pictures about what I love and believe in, trying my best. I can carry on at a much slower pace and that suits me fine.

I don't want to compete with bloggers or even criticize them. Who am I to criticize them? It is what they do and how they earn their living, and everyone has their way of earning a living. The fact that their opinion is just as important as mine, I sometimes find a little annoying, but again, it is what it is. And you know, their opinion is not for me, it is for a whole different set of people anyway. So it is fine.

Lotta: I think everyone has a voice these days. The most important thing is to stand by what you do. The danger is everything becoming the same and a little bland. I think that is a real danger. It is important to stand by your interests and beliefs and make it your thing – and that takes strength and confidence, because, you know, there will always be someone who is going to criticize what you do.

Grace: If you listen to everyone…

Lotta: You have to be quite strong and focused, that is fundamental, and you have to be able, to say what you want to say, no matter what, you cannot just listen to others.

Grace: So much of my energy is spent digging my heels in and saying, 'No, I am going to do it this way.'

Lotta: But that can be really hard.

Grace: Sure it can.

Lotta: If there is a little backlash about whatever you do, you have to be a bit punk.

Grace: It is all part of the process, I guess.

Lotta: You have to be able to ignore it or react against it.

This is directed specifically at you, Lotta; do you ever imagine a time when you are considered establishment?

[Everyone laughs]

Lotta: To be honest, I remember a lot of things changed when Demna got the job at Balenciaga and he took me there with him and I started to style the shows. A lot of things changed in a way that suddenly people reinterpret things that I say. I was just peacefully doing independent magazines by myself, and suddenly, it becomes part of the mainstream and I'm now a voice who gets listened to by the mainstream for the first time. So there is definitely a responsibility in a sense, but what is interesting in my role is to talk about those subjects that I find alternative.

Grace: That is what I meant when I said that you changed fashion. As soon as it is in fashion, it is mainstream. Balenciaga has that name and that stamp of approval, so your relationship with that, going there and working with Demna means that suddenly it became OK, and it became a whole new point of view in fashion. So that is kind of major.

Lotta: I really felt it in a personal way.

Grace: And everyone is ripping them off now, which is very flattering.

Lotta: This season was the first when Demna was designing things in a different way; he was designing things in looks. So this was the first season, I didn't style the show, for example. I worked on the casting and that was quite refreshing. It wasn't so hectic. It was pretty cool to be able to sit back. Maybe now I will have more freedom. I don't know. I am developing my own personal things, too, and it is an exciting time in that way.

That sounds like a good ending. Anything else you guys want to bring up? I feel we've covered everything and more…

Grace: I can carry on chatting on forever; I think we talked about cats the last time.

Are you a cat person or a dog person, Lotta?

Lotta: Both. I love animals. I love racoons. I would love to have a racoon. I've never seen a real live one; I saw a dead one though.

Grace: They are very vicious. We had a whole family living under the deck at our house in Long Island. You would see Mrs. Racoon and all her babies in the headlights when we came home at night. It really worried me because they could kill your cats. They are rough. They have very long teeth and claws.

1. The original celebrity hairdresser, Vidal Sassoon (1928-2012) revolutionized how women wore their hair by moving away from permanents and excessive styling towards simple cuts that needed little care. Credited with inventing the 'bob' cut for fashion designer Mary Quant in 1963, Sassoon styled the hair of most 1960s celebrities from Twiggy to Terence Stamp to Mia Farrow in *Rosemary's Baby*. A committed anti-fascist and Zionist, he was a member of 43 Group, which battled Sir Oswald Mosley's Blackshirt fascists in East London, and later fought in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.

2. *The September Issue*, about the production of the September 2007 issue of US *Vogue*, in which Grace Coddington was featured heavily, was released in September 2009.

3. Born in 1923, Beatrix Miller was evacuated to Canada aged 15, when war broke out. She returned two years later in a dangerous wartime convoy (she later remembered not changing her clothes for the entire 16-day crossing). After the war she worked for the British secret service MI6 in occupied Germany, before beginning her career in journalism as a editorial secretary at society magazine, *Queen*. She then moved to New York to work on *Vogue*, before returning to edit *Queen* in 1958. She became editor-in-chief of British *Vogue* in 1964, working with the biggest names of Swinging London, including Jean Shrimpton, David Bailey, and Terence Donovan. She retired in 1984 and died, aged 90, in 2014.

4. *Sang Blue III* was published in 2009.

5. Volkova's brand was called Lotta Skeletrix and was sold at Dover Street Market. She closed it when she moved to Paris.

6. Coddington stepped down from her role at US *Vogue* in January 2016. She is now a creative-director-at-large for the magazine, while also working on freelance projects, including with British *Vogue*.

7. *Grace: A Memoir* (co-written with *Vanity Fair* fashion and style director Michael Roberts) was published in 2012. In a review, the *Los Angeles Times* noted that: 'The book is a window into how fashion has changed from a small, niche business into a global pop culture medium.'

8. The story, which was published in the April 2018 issue of British *Vogue*, was the first story Coddington has styled for the magazine since 1988. It was shot by Craig McDean and featured model Natalie Westling.

9. Edward Enninful was appointed editor-in-chief of British *Vogue* in April 2017; his first issue was published in December 2017.

10. The *Alice in Wonderland* shoot appeared in the December 2003 issue of *Vogue*. Styled by Coddington and shot by Annie Liebovitz, with original dresses by each of the designers featured, it reimagined Lewis Carroll's classic for a fashion generation. Natalia Vodianova was Alice; Viktor Horsting and Rolf Snoeren Tweedledum and Tweedledee; Stephen Jones the Mad Hatter; Christian Lacroix the March Hare; Tom Ford the White Rabbit; John Galliano and Alexis Roche the Queen and King of Hearts; Marc Jacobs the Caterpillar; Jean Paul Gaultier the Cheshire Cat; Rupert Everett the Mock Turtle; Donatella Versace the Gryphon; Nicolas Ghesquière was Alice's cat, Dina; and Olivier Theyskens was Lewis Carroll. Karl Lagerfeld was Karl Lagerfeld.

11. One of the stories resulting from this trip was 'A War Has Many Battles', published in issue six of *Document Journal*, Spring/Summer 2015.

12. The story, which Coddington entitled 'A day in the life of the beautiful Mia Goth and her fantastic creature' on her Instagram account, was shot by Steven Klein in March 2018 for British *Vogue*.

13. Hans Feurer is a Swiss, Paris-based photographer. He is perhaps best-known for his work with and for Kenzo in the late 1970s and early 1980s, particularly a campaign with the then-unknown model Iman.

14. Saul Leiter (1923-2013) was a Pittsburgh-born photographer whose career spanned 60 years. A pioneer in colour photography when the medium was generally dismissed, he brought an eye for telling details and clever use of shallow depth of field to both his extensive street photography in the streets of New York and his fashion work for magazines including *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue*.

15. Born in 1928 in what was then Italy, but is now Croatia, Frank Horvat bought his first camera aged 17. During World War II, he and his family lived in Lugano, Switzerland; he later moved to to Milan and London, before settling in Paris in 1955. In the late 1950s, he brought a way photojournalist methods and aesthetic to fashion, pioneering shooting on location and bringing a new relaxed look to fashion photography.

16. The collection was ready-to-wear Spring/Summer 2018; there were actually two 'larger' models in the show.

17. While Carrie Donovan (1928-2001) had a long and respected career as a fashion editor at *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar* and the *New York Times Magazine*, she is perhaps now best remembered for her role as the 'Old Navy lady' in that clothing brand's 1990s advertising campaigns. Of the job, for which she starred opposite an Airedale dog named Magic, she said: 'I devote my energies to convincing young people to dress oddly, it gives us old people a real hoot.'

18. The showroom, which was used for the Autumn/Winter 2015 collection, was actually the basement of legendary Parisian gay club Le Depot on Rue aux Ours.

‘Since I was little, ‘beautiful’ wasn’t enough.’

How fashion finally landed upon Jun Takahashi’s world of Undercover.

Jun Takahashi in conversation with Kim Jones, Tim Blanks and Nobuhiko Kitamura
Photographs by Norbert Schoerner

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Jun Takahashi is unafraid to dive into the unknown. Travel into his Undercover world and his clothes appear, season after season, like answers to questions you'd never thought of asking. They have meaning, symbolizing his fearless desire to upend preconceived ideas and almost force you see the world in a new way. Indeed, since launching Undercover in 1990 in Tokyo and opening the now-legendary store Nowhere in 1993 (with Nigo and Hiroshi Fujiwara), Takahashi has actually been altering the grammar of fashion: marrying what we now call streetwear with high-fashion detailing and quality finishes, all contained in avant-garde, high-wire concepts that are both deadly serious and airily light-hearted. Add in his long-standing love of collaboration and the Undercover ethos seems to encapsulate the current fashion moment.

And the perfect time for *System* to go Undercover. So, to Tokyo, where Jun Takahashi caught up with his mentor, 'brother' and fellow designer Nobuhiko 'Nobu' Kitamura, whose label Hysteric Glamour triggered his love of fashion. He then invited a visiting Kim Jones over to Undercover HQ for a chat about how Japanese streetwear has always inspired the new Dior Homme designer's work. Meanwhile, in Paris, Tim Blanks spoke to Jun and deciphered his most recent collections the day after the final Undercover womenswear show (for the time being), entitled *We Are Infinite*. Which photographer Norbert Schoerner then shot in an apocalyptic Tokyo, as part of a larger portfolio documenting Jun Takahashi's world – taking in everything from late-night karaoke to early-morning jogging.

'Wow, you know my Undercover collections so well!'

Jun Takahashi and Kim Jones in conversation, March 16, 2018. Moderated by Norbert Schoerner

Kim Jones has loved Undercover since his student days in the late 1990s. So while he was visiting Tokyo in March – after his departure from Louis Vuitton, but before the official announcement of his new role as artistic director at Dior Homme – *System* invited him to stop by at Undercover HQ to see his friend Jun Takahashi. Their ensuing conversation reveals a deep-rooted mutual respect and examines how today's streetwear has its origins in the (sub-)cultural exchange between London and Tokyo.

'I was packing boxes in the warehouse, and remember seeing Jun's stuff and thinking how fucking cool it was – there weren't clothes like that around.'

Kim Jones: Back in 2001 when I was at college, I was helping out Michael Kopelman[1] at Gimme Five with Hysteric Glamour.[2] I was in the warehouse just packing boxes and doing stuff for them. There would be a catalogue with all the new season's stuff and I just remember seeing Jun's stuff coming in and thinking how fucking cool it was – there just weren't clothes like that around. There was that punk element with lots of modern stuff. I've still got the platform shoes.
Jun Takahashi: Which ones?
Kim: They are bright electric blue with the checkboard plastic over the front. I never wore them because I love them so much; I've had them in the box ever since. I think it was Spring/Summer 1999. I've got all my Undercover stuff in storage because it goes way back. Michael was always really kind and would let us order stuff; he was really generous. We would look at things and enjoy the detailing. Small Parts[3] was one of my favourite ones. You couldn't really get any Undercover stuff from anywhere apart from directly from Japan, so people would be like, 'What are you wearing, where's that from?' And people just couldn't work it out, because it was that mix, I hate the term streetwear, but it was an element. It was fashion, and if you released all that stuff now, it would still be really relevant, that's the thing. I was talking with Fraser Cooke[4] about it and we were saying that the old Undercover stuff is just as modern now as when you first did it – and that's a really great thing. I remember when the boxes would come in with the orders and everyone was super excited and would just sort of rip into them finding their things. When you saw all these amazing things that you were doing, or Hiroshi or Nigo.[5] It was more interesting to look at – nothing normal or typical. There was Helmut Lang and Margiela, which I loved, but this was just a completely different way of thinking, the attention to detail, the branding on everything was just so strong. When I started designing it was something I would always think about, like the detailing on a zip pull. In luxury, you can obviously do those things in quite an extravagant way, but the starting point was your stuff. I've got a grey Small Parts jacket and whenever I wear it, people always ask me where I got it from, because it's just so relevant.

Norbert Schoerner: Michael Kopelman had such a key role, connecting Japan and Europe, and the same with Stüssy the other way, and somehow, he doesn't get the credit for it.
Kim: Yeah, true.
Jun: He is very important. Kim, so when did you come to Tokyo for the first time?
Kim: I came in 2001 and I had just graduated. I had £200 with me, my sister had got me a flight and hotel room for a graduation present. I remember walking around and it was quite difficult because there weren't that many foreign people here and your phone didn't work and there were no English signs. It's really changed now; it is really easy to get around and do things. I think I was so shell-shocked that I don't think I liked it very much because I didn't know how to deal with it. But the second time I came out, I completely fell in love. I don't think I was prepared the first time; I'd been looking at *Boon* magazine[6] and had all this shopping in mind. I was still working for Michael when I left college, he had given me some addresses, but I was walking through Harajuku on my own and I didn't really know where to go. Now you can just type on your phone and find a shop, but it was very alien back then; it was like you were in the future. And I think the yen was really strong against the pound, so I bought a pair of socks from Undercover and a T-shirt from Bathing Ape and that was it.
Jun: In 2001?
Kim: Yes.

As are a foreigner coming here, you are either shell-shocked or completely mesmerised. How is it for Japanese people leaving Japan for the first time?
Jun: I went to London for the first time in 1991 and I was already into punk and everything. I went to London with Hitomi Okawa.[7] We travelled together and then she introduced me to Michael, whose house and office we visited together. We also went to his Christmas party and met Michael's friends. Michael and Hitomi took me to the shops. We didn't have Internet and he told us, 'So this is where punk fashion was born'. It was very impressive.
Kim: How did that affect your design?
Jun: I was already influenced by UK culture and fashion but when I went there, I felt it myself and that made a big difference. At the time I was also learning about Comme des Garçons and Margiela, so everything from the UK and all those different elements influenced me at the time. Street culture and everything. All different things were interesting me.

'I first came to Tokyo in 2001; my sister had bought me the flight as a graduation present. I remember struggling because there were no English signs.'

What about Paris, did you have a relationship with Paris?
Jun: At the time? I was not so interested in Paris. I never even thought of working in Paris at the time.
Kim: Me neither. The only reason I did my second men's show in Paris was because there wasn't any menswear in London Fashion Week and they wouldn't let me show on my own. And I thought, 'Well, if I am going to do a proper brand, then I have to do it in Paris where there is a men's week'. It cost a lot more money, but I just thought that you have to think big. I never really thought about it; I just did it. It was more challenging, but it helped me get where I am now, I guess. You have to go to the places where people do and see everything; you can't expect everyone to follow you when you are just starting out. It's much easier now with all the digital communications, Instagram and whatever, but back then you might get a little article in a newspaper or magazine. And people were seeing things six months before, but then you'd have to wait to see the full collection.

Maybe it is good to be out of your natural environment as well, because you have to work harder.
Kim: I love doing shows; it's my favourite time and the nicest part of the job I think. Everyone leaves you alone, because they know you're really busy and it's quite stressful, but you can really be with your team and enjoy it. I love working with people and that thing of not having other people coming into the studio and asking questions all the time. We might have the seating-plan meeting, but that's only five minutes and the rest of the time is really creative.
Jun: I agree. My main job is to prepare everything for the shows. I assemble all of the elements of a show, such as its world view, the design and music, at the same time. I work on the basic design quietly alone, while listening to my favourite music. This is when I'm happiest. At that time, staff members leave me alone, just like yours do, Kim. My greatest pleasure is the process of expanding the theme and world view that I have visualized.
Kim: Were you scared when you first showed in Paris?
Jun: It wasn't too scary because I had been doing shows for 10 years in Tokyo, so I knew what to do, but you never know what the reactions will be. Japanese people don't really criticize the shows; they just say, 'Oh, great show'. They don't say much more than that. People say things aloud more in Europe; they criticize. I didn't know what to expect, how a Tokyo designer would be perceived in Paris. And especially at the time, my work was really a mix of street and high fashion, so I didn't know at all what people would think as it was not as popular then to mix those two. So I was scared. The first show in Paris was for Spring/Summer 2003. The collection was called *Scab* and we held the show at the Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs.[8] Actually, I didn't originally intend to hold a show in Paris; I didn't even dream it could happen. But while I continued showing in Tokyo, I developed this desire to present my work to more people. I decided I wanted to hold a show in Paris a few years before I actually debuted in 2003, I think it was 1999, so I went there to talk to local media. The reactions of the people I met at that time were not so good, even if we did discuss a project for a big feature in one magazine. But when I got back to Japan they flatly said that they'd never made such a proposal. I was really depressed and gave up on doing anything in Paris for a while. Then Rei Kawakubo of Comme des Garçons came to see my show in Tokyo and the next day, I received a fax from her, saying: 'Why don't you hold a show in Paris? I think it is about time.' That was what made me decide to move the show to Paris. Also, I felt my work in Tokyo had reached its limit. So I went

back to Paris to prepare for showing there and get everything in place. All that was left was to believe in the work and present the designs that I had been working on up until then. Fortunately, Rei Kawakubo and Adrian [Joffe of Comme des Garçons] had told the media in advance that a brand called Undercover from Tokyo was going to show and urged them to go see it. That's why a lot of media came to the very first show. There were differing reactions, but I remember being really delighted to be able to listen to their honest feedback.

It took you out of your comfort zone.

Kim: I had the naivety of youth too, I think. I was just running around without thinking and luckily people responded well, but when you are young, you don't think so much; you just do things. People reacted well to what I'd done, and I just thought I should keep on doing it. I never really wanted my own label; I always wanted to work for people, because I prefer that. My dream was to work for Louis Vuitton because when I first left college I did some graphics for them and I saw the facilities they had, and I was like, wow. And I got the job 10 years to the day after graduating, so it was a nice thing in my career. But then you get the seven-year itch and you have to challenge yourself or you can get quite complacent – and I like to challenge myself. I loved working there. It was a brilliant experience and I still have a great relationship with everyone there, but I wanted to challenge myself with something else, so I thought it was a good time to change.

Jun: How did you feel about working for Vuitton only 10 years after you graduated. It sounds really fast. How did you get the job?

Kim: I'd stopped my label and had been working with Dunhill for three years when I got a call from Vuitton. I went for an interview and did a project for them, and then I got the call to say I'd got the job. I was so happy I was crying. I think it was the right time for me, because if I'd got it earlier I probably wouldn't have done such a good job; I wouldn't have had enough experience. So it was just that thing, right timing. I went in and planned out what I would do for the first collection, and it sold really well and people liked it. It felt like the right thing. What I like about Vuitton is that essentially it is a luxury luggage brand and I like travelling and seeing the world, so it fitted in with my lifestyle. I think that when you can fit things with your lifestyle, then they work very well. I have been to lots of amazing places looking for stuff for collections, and I've seen the world. Anyway, tell me more about your first show in Paris; that was the 'scab collection', right?

Jun: Yes. It was inspired by this genre called crust punk or crustcore. It was a branch of hardcore punk that was all about vegetarianism, animal protection and DIY. I was inspired by the patched outfits worn by these crust punks. Their ragged, patched clothes looked very elegant to me. For the collection, we hand-stitched a vast number of small pieces of cloth together and the name came about because the small strips of cloth looked like scabs.

Kim: I remember those jeans – they were sewn from millions and millions of little patches. It's that level of detail that you so rarely get with designers. You can do that at Vuitton though and I think it's something that you do, too. It's about being able to do things at a level you really want to do them at. And I think one of the good things about Japan is the high level of production that you have here. When I had the Kim Jones label,[9] I produced my stuff in Japan because we sold to more stores in Japan and so it was cheaper to import it from Japan than to make stuff in England. Whenever I see good young designers in the UK, and I speak to a lot of them, I always try and point them in the direction of good manufacturers or people who can help them to make their products, because that is the biggest challenge. In Japan, you don't have to do huge quantities and you can have this exceptional quality, with fabric making too. In England, there are only a few fabric makers left; it's a bit of a sad state of affairs. You just have to look at the world rather than one place.

Jun: Even in Japan, lots of factories are closing, the fabric places… But as you say, the quality is good, but not so much the shoes anymore. It is getting harder and harder in Japan because all the shoemakers are disappearing, with no new ones to replace them.

One forgets how big the Japanese fashion market is, the domestic market.[10] I don't think people in Europe or America think about that so much.

Kim: I think it's interesting when brands that aren't perceived as being that big in other countries then come

'I received a fax from Rei Kawakubo, saying: 'Why don't you hold a show in Paris? I think it is about time.' That was the trigger.'

here and they're really popular in Japan and have a huge store. It's really crazy!

Jun: Japanese customers are really addicted to fashion; they catch all the new trends. I think Japanese have foresight for music and fashion down through the ages. They have a talent for finding talented artists earlier than anyone else and expanding their art. I think Japanese are unchanged in this regard.

Kim: Also, certain brands like Undercover become cult, so they have a loyal following who will always be there. Those people understand what the brand is and what it's for. It's really nice when people just love what a brand is and just support it constantly. You see that a lot in Japan, not so much in other places.

Jun: The growth of the Internet has meant that more information is available and that's eliminated the difference between Japanese and overseas followers. And thanks to the spread of the Internet, more people around the world have come to understand the history of Undercover. I feel like recently the brand is finally being understood.

As a Japanese designer, do you think about the Japanese market and the Japanese environment more than the audience in Europe and America? They're very different I would think. Or do Japanese designers want to work worldwide?

Jun: Now we have access all around the world, but in the past, it was just about Japan. To begin with I never really thought about selling my clothes outside of Japan. I just never thought about it. I only started realizing I could go outside the country when I found people outside of Japan wearing my clothes or they came to Japan and I saw customers from abroad.

Kim: It's quite funny though because it is very hard to find imagery of Undercover before you started showing in Europe. I have old *Boon* magazines and a copy of the Undercover special of *relax* magazine,[11] but it was very underground. So when you did the book,[12] people were like, 'Oh my goodness this is incredible!' A lot of people in the Louis Vuitton studio went to buy the book and thought it was really amazing. It was a secret until the book came out. It's like the first chapter of what you had done, and then people started to get what it was really about. You know, people like Tim Blanks who really loves Undercover and puts it as his number-one show each season. That's amazing when you think there are all these other big companies advertising and paying a lot of money to work with these websites and there you are at the top!

Jun: Tim understands everything about the cultural background that I have and we connect really well, so it is lucky. He doesn't look just at the design of the clothes; he sees fashion from so many viewpoints such as the designer's background and the world view they incorporate into the design of their clothes, why they show their collections when, as well as viewpoints such as the global situation and political background when they put on their shows. In particular, sources of inspiration for Undercover are mostly elements of music and art. Tim has such a good knowledge and deep understanding of them, so he understands the world view that I present much more deeply than other journalists. I also think he believes in the dreams and hopes that fashion embraces.

Kim: He is one of my neighbours in London, not that I get to see him that much. He understands a lot of things and there are not many people who do…

Jun: He is English, too?

Kim: No, he's from New Zealand. But he escaped as soon as he could!

Jun: He used to be a music writer?

Kim: Yes, and he understands everything and won't pass by anything without giving it a really proper look. I think it's really important in life to do that. Michael Kopelman was someone who taught me how to work with people and how to be generous with people and how to be supportive of the team you work with. And you learn different lessons from different people.

Jun: We are from streetwear backgrounds, but recently people in high fashion are starting to understand us more. Street culture is having a big influence on fashion worldwide at the moment. A majority of designers are incorporating this trend superficially into their design, but some of them, who, like me, have been influenced by street culture since their childhood, do it in a much deeper way. I think Raf Simons, Takahiro Miyashita and you, Kim, are among those who get it. I started design when Harajuku culture was catching on in the first half of the 1990s. The generation of designers like Virgil Abloh, who were influenced by the Urahara fashion[13] that I created with Nigo, are active in the frontline today.

'Designers incorporate street culture superficially into their work, but people like me and you and Raf Simons have been influenced by it since childhood.'

Kim: I would never call what you do streetwear because the level of detailing and the design goes too far. Street for me is a sweatshirt or a pair of simple pants. That is not what you do, and it never has been. Especially around 2000, those collections are some of the most important things I have ever seen in my life in terms of going beyond details and about the way you put things together. Do you remember all the punk plaid stuff and the masks?[14] I remember being completely blown away because I was still at college and it was just so far forward; there was nothing else around like it.

Jun: You know, for me, designing graphics for T-shirts is work on the same level as designing an elegant dress. That's what my philosophy is all about: designing between street fashion and sophisticated fashion. So for that collection, we made tartan from many different materials and combined them to create a single piece of clothing, for example. Buttons, back cloths, tags, even shoe soles were made from entirely different materials but the patterns on them were the same. For the show, the models' faces were painted in check patterns. I named the show *Melting Pot* with the idea that we are all humans although races are different.

Kim: It's about loving different things and seeing how they work together. And all those Sk8thing T-shirts you did in Spring/Summer 2001.[15]

Jun: Wow, you know my Undercover collections so well!

Kim: Because you did all the re-editions recently and I rebought the T-shirts I had lost. They look so modern still; they are just timeless and that is really nice. I still have all my Small Parts sweatshirts with the hotdog. Mixing around the fronts and backs, that sort of customizing before everyone was doing personalization in things. The actual pattern cutting and thought processes behind all that were really impressive, too. The fact that you could buy all these things and put them back together differently– you'd have like knit sleeves on a denim jacket or a parka. It was really cool.

Jun: Design is like playing around with toys. I enjoy it, so maybe that is what leads to good creation. I've always thought that unless a designer enjoys developing designs, nothing good will be produced. If it becomes too much business and work, then maybe I wouldn't be able to create such things. I know Vuitton creates a lot of good stuff, but was it difficult to work there? You didn't find it hard working in such a big company?

Kim: I had such a nice group of people in my team; they were really there with me, and as long as you involve everyone every step of the way, you know you will be OK. It was difficult because there were lots of changes and you had to get used to that. When they changed, it would take the new person quite a while to get familiar with things. But I would talk to everyone; I'm not a snob. It was only if someone had done something awful that I would have no time for them, because I think that's the best way to deal with it. But you know, I like to work with people and there were lots of really great people who I worked with. I understood that a pre-collection was more commercial than a show collection, so the show collection was where you could have really good fun and just make it yours. We'd have briefs for different things, like making a titanium monogram, where the real challenge was to make it look as metallic as possible. So, we would challenge each other and make things really interesting. Of course, there were times when things were harder to deal with, but then that's the same when you have your own company and you're your own boss. I've done both jobs. People keep telling me that if I started my own label again, then I'd sell tons, but I like working within a structure and seeing really big growth; that's what's exciting. I like working with the best materials in the world and having the best people to make them, and that for me is a joy. It is very different to being in Japan where you have access to that anyway. In Europe, it takes a while for an independent designer to access facilities that can make such good stuff. I love working for a brand, because if it was a type of art, it would be pop art. That is an interesting way to look at it because it is so global, so much about lots of people loving it because it is so big. You have to look at it through that lens because it is not avant-garde; it's got to be real, and pop art is real.

What about running your own company, Jun? Do you get involved with the business management side of things or can you stay away from it?

Jun: Yes, I do have to make final decisions, but for the financial stuff, I have my younger brother and other people working on it.

'For me, designing graphics for T-shirts requires the same level of work as designing elegant dresses. My philosophy is: between street and sophisticated.'

Kim: People you can trust, that's good.
Jun: In the past, I had other people working for me and they did bad stuff. Now I have a family member who I can trust helping me with the financial side of the business, which I'm really bad at. This means I can concentrate on the design work that I am good at without worrying about the extra stuff.
Kim: That happens a lot in fashion. It's hard to find good partnerships.
Jun: It must be really fun to work on something like Vuitton, which has a history and all these archives you can work with. I think that must be really interesting.
Kim: There wasn't really a clothing archive, but there was an archive of the history, so good things that you could take as references. I would always start each collection at Vuitton with a book with people, we would look at the history and see if there was anything we could do a collection around. I didn't dig too much into the Vuitton archive at first, because I always wanted to find something new each time.
Jun: It is fascinating to take something from the past and to make it your own way. Over the years we have interacted with many artworks and artists, like in 2015, when we used Hieronymus Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights* for Spring/Summer and Michaël Borremans for Autumn/Winter. It is so interesting that you worked with the Chapman brothers.
Kim: We did it twice. I love Jake and have known him for quite a long time. I went to the Himalayas for research because there was a story in the archive about travelling through the Himalayas with these trunks and there were all these weird animals. So I thought, who can draw weird animals better than the Chapman brothers? That was why I got them involved in it. It was that *kawaii* scary vibe I was interested in. Isn't there is a different word to say 'scary *kawaii*'?
Jun: *Kowaii*. I am going to interview you now! You took me to the Vuitton office once. Did you go there at the same time every day?
Kim: I would be in about 9.30 to 10, but I'm not someone who can be in the office every day. You need to be out seeing stuff in order to give back. When you work in a big company, you work with lots of people and you have to give them autonomy and the information they need to work, and you have to look around. When I first started, I was there all day every day, but then I realized that I didn't need to be there all time, that I was more useful when I was out doing research and finding stuff to take back. It depended though; sometimes you'd go on press trips and all these different things. It was different all the time. What is weird now is that this is the first time in 10 years that I haven't had a schedule for the next two months. I've been really busy, but it's nice to have no structure. Wednesday I stayed in bed and watched TV with the dogs and that is a real luxury for me. You just have to work it how it is. Obviously, when you're working for something big, there is a lot more press going on; you might go open a store in Hong Kong or Tokyo. We would use a lot of fabrics from Japan, so we would come here a lot. It's a great place to do research and get inspired. Last year I was coming virtually every month because I just love being here and I always get a ton of ideas. Plus, the market changes here and as it is the leading market, it's great to buy cool new things here. When you see what is popular in Japan, you know what will be successful worldwide. It is just a more mature market.

'When you see what is popular in Japan, you know what will become successful worldwide. It is just a more mature market here.'

on their company's trunks throughout the ages. So you would see a trunk that went to India for a maharaja and another that went to Africa. Then you would read the story behind each one and our research for that season would come out of that. There was the whole thing of the journey and travelling, and you could create a story with all of that. I also like the idea of what things will look like in 100 years. Like when we did the see-through trunk with the Chapman brothers.[16] The fact we even worked with the Chapman brothers is quite fun and quite sick, but it worked super well. Working with Hiroshi[17] was a really great thing, too, because he is one of the biggest buyers of Vuitton in Japan, so it made sense. I don't like things when they don't make sense. I think there has to be authenticity, so when we worked

Do you see that too, Jun?
Jun: Are you sure it is like that? I am not sure, maybe now, but not in the past.

Kim: Jun, do you have an archive for everything you have made?
Jun: Yes, not so much before 2000, and I don't have anything at all myself, but in the office, we have lots of stuff. After we started doing the Paris shows, we started doing archives properly. So you personally probably have more than we do!

Kim: I remember the hamburger collection and the hamburger shorts,[18] and I'd wear it with Vans and a sweatshirt. That was my favourite thing, in olive green. I will have to find it all. I've kept every pattern of my stuff, but I gave a lot of samples to friends, and I have a list of who's got what just in case I need to go and get it. I just gave them to close friends who I knew really wanted them. It was impossible to keep it all; I didn't have the resources at the time, but I also like to move on. But it is nice to make re-editions now for young people, because it is 10 years since I finished. Like when you did your anniversary re-issues, it was so nice to see all those things again.
Jun: Some people said we were doing the same thing again, but it was a really good way to present our history.
Kim: Completely, and a really nice way to celebrate what you'd done in the past. I think it is important to do that because a lot of designers lose their work. Margiela is everywhere again now; he did such amazing things.
Jun: This season was really amazing, for sure.
Kim: You could do a really nice museum exhibition – that would be amazing to see.
Jun: Maybe outside of Japan, because we already did that for our 25th anniversary here.[19] We are a small company, so it is difficult to find a place to do it.
Kim: We'll have a think, right?
Jun: Are you still living in Paris?
Kim: I have a place in Paris, but I work between London and Paris, because London is where my life is and where I need to be; it is part of what I do. I am excited about change; it makes you nervous, but that's a good thing. It is nice to look at things with a different approach. You go through a phase where you are really into something and then you'll look at something else, and I think it's nice when designers do that. They are challenging themselves and that's very important or you get bored.
Jun: Exciting news about Dior Homme. Can I come and see your first show?
Kim: Yes, of course, I think it's on June 23. When is yours?
Jun: We are waiting to confirm.
Kim: Let's keep in touch! Whenever you've invited me to your show, I'm normally not in town; I'm off visiting fabric suppliers, often in Japan. The fabrics here are super expensive but super amazing. I would quite like to live in Japan. I would like to travel around Japan, too; I have been to a few places, but it is always a rush, and I would like to see things properly. There is a lot here to see. I went to the theme park near Mount Fuji, and it was only roller-coasters. I was so scared because I am so scared of heights!

Both of you work so much, do you ever have any time to do something outside?
Kim: We are lucky in Paris because we get a summer holiday, which is long.
Jun: Weekdays I work until seven and then I go home, and weekends are off.
Kim: When you know how to work you can sort of pace it, but when you are working for these big companies, there is a lot of work to do, so it can be quite relentless. You need to make sure you book time off. I don't really eat in the evenings because I eat at work, but then I go home and watch some TV to take my mind off things and then go to bed.
Jun: It took a while to do it, but now I can switch off after work. Even if I go out with friends of mine who are designers, photographers, musicians, and actors, I never talk about work at all. The only people outside the company who I talk to about work are people working with us on shows and, once in a while, my family. When I am off, I do nothing basically. I am just an ordinary father. If I had no time to spend with my family or friends, I wouldn't be able to make the distinction between work and private life
Kim: In Paris I don't know so many people, so it is very quiet for me. I work and go home, but when I am in London, I'll have dinner with someone or do stuff. Because I have done my job properly you are allowed to that; they respect you and allow you to do that. And when you've put so much in, it's important to make time for yourself. The company knows that's important.
Jun: When I last visited you in Paris, you were looking for an apartment. Did you find one?
Kim: I got a really nice one actually, on Place des Victoires. You can shut the gate behind you and you are just at home. I know other designers, but if you are in Paris, you are there to work. As I mentioned just before, in London, I have more of a life. I don't want to go back every weekend on the train, because it gets really monotonous. I like to make sure I have a proper work-life balance. The Eurostar is really amazing though.
Jun: I would like to live in London for some time.

'Undercover is the perfect way to describe me. In Paris, no one knows me! Even when I go to the shows in Paris, I never get noticed.'

Kim: It is a nice place to live. I live in Little Venice and it is really nice. You kind of get these pockets in London. I wanted somewhere with a garden, so the dogs could run around and not bark at the neighbours. I like having my friends nearby and going shopping. I like to choose my own shopping; I like to do stuff myself. Not have a housekeeper. I love walking to places. I have a driver, but that is a business thing. I'll walk all the way to Soho and have my music and you can look at everyone. I don't like having my photo in lots of things because then more people know you and stop you... It happens more in Japan where people stop to have photos with me. Of course, I will always do it because they are potential customers.
Jun: For me, it is just maybe around Tokyo, but as a designer I am not that well-known.
Kim: Undercover is the perfect way to describe how you are. You can live your life in your own way.
Jun: In Paris, no one knows me! Even when I go to shows in Paris, I never get noticed.
Kim: That is a good thing. I made a mistake with the Supreme thing and hated going out. I looked really fat in that picture, so have been on a diet ever since! It's like when you're doing a show and you're locked in for days, drinking Coke and eating what is there because you are starving. It's really hard to think about. Would you ever think about joining a fashion house if you were approached to join one?
Jun: I would love to. But of course, it depends who.
Kim: I can see you doing an amazing job.
Jun: No one's ever offered though!
Kim: Just one more season of Tim's great reviews!
Jun: Maybe because of the language barrier.
Kim: I think that people look more at the talent and experience. My French is terrible, but I get by. I understand everything, but just speaking it is very difficult. But you make it work because communication and harmony in your team is so key. When you are doing this job, you cannot do it on your own. You are the starting point, but then you need everyone else who works with you. People say you can collaborate too much, but I always say, 'But you collaborate every day at work'.
Jun: From the beginning, I was collaborating. I like to collaborate. Whether it's with Hiroshi Fujiwara, Nigo, Uniqlo or Nike, one plus one can produce four because you're working together with people and companies that have something you don't have. For my running-wear collaboration with Nike, it has technology and all kinds of data related to running that Undercover could never develop by itself. It is the same for the collaboration with Uniqlo, especially for children's clothing. If Undercover made childrenswear by itself, it would cost as much as adults' clothing. But the kids' wear I designed with Uniqlo is offered at one tenth of the price that Undercover could manufacture it for. I have children and I know they grow fast, so I can say that good kids' wear has to better designed and at an accessible price. Collaborations have meant that I have made things I could never have achieved by myself.

Kim: In Japan, there is a support for each other and a lot of exciting things come out of that.
Jun: Yes, we are all friends.
Kim: I've always wanted to do something with you, Jun; it's on my wish list. Maybe we can do something now! I wanted to do some specifically Japanese stuff, but all in good time. It is really nice to work with people you admire so much and see someone else's perspective. You learn things without even realizing it sometimes and I think that is a really nice way to do it. Whether you are a photographer, stylist, even hair and make-up, it makes things look completely different. I hate it when people go on about *my* show, when really is should be *our* show. There are so many people working on it and I think it is really important. Especially for young people to see that there are a lot of people behind these big things. There are so many roles involved, you can be all these different things…

1. Michael Kopelman is a British streetwear legend. He opened his distribution company Gimme Five in 1989 importing previously unavailable and unknown brands from the US and Japan. An early supporter of Stüssy, he became the brand's UK director and part of what became known as the International Stüssy Tribe, which also included James Jebbia (founder of Supreme), Hiroshi Fujiwara (future designer of Goodenough) and Luca Benini (who later created Slam Jam). In 1998, he opened a store in London's Soho called Hit and Run – later renamed The Hideout – stocking the best streetwear from around the world, much of it from Japanese brands such as A Bathing Ape, Visvim and Neighbourhood. The store closed in 2014.

2. Hysteric Glamour is a Japanese brand founded in 1984 by Nobuhiko Kitamura; it is known for its reappropriation of US pop culture and its collaborations with brands including Supreme and Playboy.

3. Small Parts was part of the Undercover Autumn/Winter 1998-1999 *Exchange* collection. Every part of the garment, from collars to sleeves, hems to bodices, was designed to be able to be swapped with parts from other garments in the collection: knitted sleeves could be attached to a blouson or a jacket could be turned into a coat. Each part of each garment carried a label saying Small Parts.

4. Fraser Cooke is now Global Energy Marketing Director at Nike. The co-founder of legendary London sneaker store Footpatrol, he was responsible for Takahashi's Nike collaboration, Gyakusou.

5. Designer and musician Hiroshi Fujiwara – the 'godfather of Harajuku' – founded clothing labels Goodenough and Fragment Design, and fragrance brand retaW. Nigo was the founder and creative director of A Bathing Ape, one of the key Japanese streetwear brands of the 1990s and early 2000s. He was a partner alongside Fujiwara and Takahashi in the legendary store Nowhere, which opened in 1993. He also created two brands with Pharrell Williams, Billionaire Boys Club and Ice Cream. Spiralling debts forced him to sell A Bathing Ape to a Chinese company in 2011 for $2.8 million and he left the brand in April 2013. He is now the creative director for Uniqlo's UT line.

6. *Boon* was a Japanese street-fashion magazine that at its peak sold over half a million copies an issue. It does not appear to have been published since 2015.

7. Hitomi Okawa, sometimes called the 'muse of Harajuku', is a pioneering designer, buyer, store owner and all-round renaissance woman. She founded her label and store Milk in 1970, the former stocked in the latter, which quickly became the place where Japanese customers and international visitors alike could discover new labels (Comme des Garçons was first sold out of Milk). She launched her menswear line Milkboy in 1974 and still designs both labels. She was instrumental in the early careers of Takahasi, Nigo and Fujiwara.

8. The Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs became the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in 2005.

9. Jones' eponymous label was active between 2004 and 2008.

10. According to Japanese retailer United Arrows, 'Japan's retail apparel market is roughly ¥9-10 trillion a year' (c.$80 billion). In the luxury sector, Japan remains the world's second biggest market, behind the US but still ahead of China.

11. A culture, design and trends magazine, *relax* appears to have stopped publication around 2006.

12. The book, *Undercover*, tells the story of the label. Produced by Takahashi and with a foreword written by Suzy Menkes, it was published by Rizzoli in July 2016.

13. Urahara is a shortening of 'ura-Harajuku', which means 'hidden Harajuku'; it refers to a small, four-block section of Harajuku considered ground zero for Japanese streetwear. Nowhere, Takahashi's store, was in Urahara.

14. Autumn/Winter 2000-2001.

15. For Spring/Summer 2001, Takahashi collaborated on a line of T-shirts with Sk8thing, a designer who has worked with A Bathing Ape, Billionaire Boys Club, Ice Cream, Neighborhood, WTaps and Bounty Hunter. He is now at C.E.

16. British artists Jake and Dinos Chapman are known for their dioramas featuring landscapes in which small figures commit acts of murderous violence. The pair were part of the group known as the Young British Artists (YBA), whose work was bought, promoted, exhibited and then sold by art collector Charles Saatchi in the 1990s.

17. Kim Jones collaborated with Hiroshi Fujiwara of Fragment Design on an Autumn/Winter 2017 pre-collection. It was based around the idea of an imaginary band called Louis V and the Fragments.

18. Spring/Summer 2002. Jun Takahashi would like to note: 'It was not all about hamburgers though.'

19. *Labryrinth of Undercover* was a 25-year retrospective of the label held at Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery, from October 10-December 23, 2015. Alongside a wide selection of garments and a large sign spelling out the label's motto, 'We make noise, not clothes', visitors were able to discover Takahashi's notebooks full of the sketches and clippings that inspired the collections. A review of the exhibition in the *Japan Times* noted that: 'You may find that [Takahashi] not only wears his heart on the sleeves of his work, but he also relentlessly tugs at the strings of yours.'

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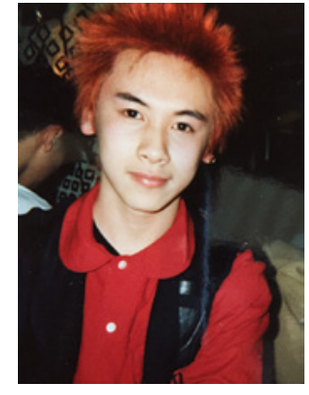

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1. Nineteen-year-old student Jun Takahashi dancing in his Hysteric Glamour 'Spider-man' T-shirt, 1988.
at the launch party for Hysteric Glamour's Takasaki store, at which the brand's founder Nobuhiko 'Nobu' Kitamura DJ-ed, 1988.
2. Jun with Nigo, around 1990
3. Jun with a friend, around 1990
4. Jun with Nigo and other friends at a music venue, June 18, 1989
5. Jun in a club, around 1989

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6. Nowhere, a shop run by Nigo and Jun Takahashi, which opened on a Harajuku backstreet in April 1993.
7. Skirt, 1992
8. Invitation to Undercover's debut womenswear runway show, Autumn/Winter 1994-95, presented at Daikanyama's The Garage, April 18, 1994.
9. Twin models at Undercover's Autumn/Winter 1999-2000 womenswear runway show, entitled *Ambivalence*, Tokyo, April 1999.
10. Invitation to Undercover's Autumn/Winter 1999-2000 womenswear runway show, entitled *Ambivalence*, Tokyo, April 1999.

Repro photography: The Forge, London

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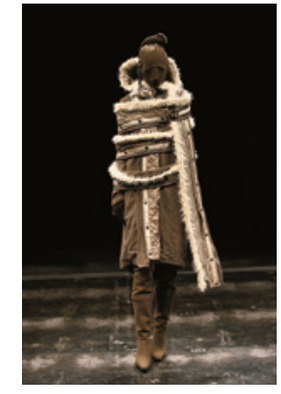

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11. Hamburger Lamp by Undercover × Medicom Toy, originally released as a limited edition in 2002.
12. Twin models at Undercover Spring/Summer 2004 womenswear runway show, entitled *Languid*, Paris, October 2003.
13. Undercover for Comme des Garçons graphic print, Spring/Summer 2005.
14. Undercover Autumn/Winter 2006-2007 womenswear runway show, entitled *BBV Guruguru*, Paris, March 2006.
15. *Seditionaries*, a book documenting the vast private collection amassed by Jun Takahashi and Hiroshi Fujiwara of Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood's 1970s Seditionaries clothing label, published in 2005.

'Rebellious clothes are born out of rebellious music.'

Jun Takahashi and Nobu Kitamura in conversation, April 6, 2018. Moderated by Hiroshi Kagiyama

Nobuhiko 'Nobu' Kitamura is the designer behind Hysteric Glamour, the pioneering Japanese streetwear label he founded in 1984, and a long-time friend, mentor, spiritual older brother and drinking partner of Jun Takahashi aka Jonio-san. *System* sat the pair down in Tokyo, to discuss the past, present and future of streetwear and how the world has *finally* caught up with their vision.

MC: It's a bit abrupt, but how about starting with your past, or stories of old days? First, I would like to ask Jonio-san:[1] how did Nobu-san help you start your career? How did he influence you?

Jun Takahashi: When I was in the first or second year of high school, I went to Ashikaga,[2] the town next to mine.

Nobu Kitamura: My first ever Hysteric Glamour store was in Ashikaga. I often went to Ashikaga and Takasaki[3] to visit the stores that bought our products and attend events. In 1988, the person who set up stores in northern Kanto[4] said we should have a party there. So I went up to Takasaki, near Jonio's hometown, and we had a Hysteric Glamour party where I DJed. And he was there.

Jun: I went to the party with my friends from my hometown.

Nobu: Much later, I happened to bump into a friend who I hadn't seen for decades. He showed me a photo from the party [see photograph 1 on page 189], then said: 'Nobu-san, isn't this photo nostalgic? You were the DJ.' I replied, 'Yeah, good old days'. Then I looked at it again and saw a Hysteric Glamour 'Spider-man' T-shirt and when I enlarged the photo, it was Jonio wearing it!

You were already wearing Hysteric clothes at that time.

Jun: I went to the store in the next-door town almost every week by train to find out about Hysteric Glamour; I loved the clothes there. At the time, DC brands[5] like Comme des Garçons, Melrose or Grass were the trend. Only DC styles – the so-called *mode* – were available then. But Hysteric was the first brand from Tokyo that integrated fashion with music. It incorporated pop culture and everything. It amazed me. I started visiting the store and bought clothes. That was the start of everything – my encounter with Hysteric Glamour. I went to the party with my friends as a customer of Hysteric Glamour, and went wild. I later went to Tokyo to enter Bunka Fashion College[6] and launched Undercover in 1990. Then, the following year, I went to London and became friends with Michael Kopelman[7] from Gimme Five and his peers. It was around then I actually got to know Nobu-san in Tokyo.

Undercover emerged from that time?

Jun: Yes.

Nobu: I started Hysteric Glamour when I was 21. I didn't know how to run a business at all. The delivery service was not as developed in 1984 as it is today, so after work, I would drive to the Kiryu area[8] where fabrics were produced and sewing and embroidery factories were located. It was a traditional area for apparel production. At night, I would take patterns to embroidery factories and then receive the finished embroidery. The place I visited happened to be close to Jonio's hometown.

Jun: Very near.

Nobu: Looking back, it was amazing that I went up there so often. It was a coincidence. After that, we had another coincidence with London and all the people here today; Michael Kopelman was part of that. We met the same people through him and we had many friends in common, but we never saw them at the same time. We finally met after this series of coincidences and discovered that our shared love of music and movies meant we could have great conversations. I found Jonio very knowledgeable about things I was not interested in at all and Jonio didn't know about the things I was interested in. So we taught each other. It was amazing. We are not simply friends, nor is it a kind of junior-senior relationship dynamic. We work independently, but occasionally, we get together and it feels totally natural. How can I define our relationship?

Jun: Very mysterious.

Nobu: Yes, almost like brothers.

Jun: When I was in high school, I used to love visiting that Hysteric Glamour store so much. And after meeting with Michael, Hiroshi[9] and many other people from that scene, I met Nobu-san and learned a lot from him. He influenced my work. Even with our families, we are like brothers.

Nobu: Like relatives. I was born in

'I found Jonio very knowledgeable about things I was not interested in and Jonio didn't know about the things I was interested in. We taught each other.'

Jun Takahashi and Nobu Kitamura, Tokyo, April 2018.

Tokyo, but I feel the area where Jonio was brought up is my second hometown because it was the company in Ashikaga that agreed to run a store for me after only looking at my drawings and ideas, instead of the samples I was supposed to make. It was very strange. Coincidences followed one after another, and things seemed meant to be, and then just became obvious. A friendship generally requires constant communication, but we don't need it much because we are like relatives or brothers.

Jun: It's really amazing.

Both of you are leading experts in twisting overseas culture and music, and incorporating them and expressing them in your designs and brands. Jonio-san, you said you were greatly influenced by Nobu-san. How exactly do those influences reveal themselves in your own clothing?

Jun: Neither Nobu-san nor I make clothes out of nothing. Both of us create clothes using whatever has influenced us, whether that's music, movies, culture or something we just think is cool. Neither of us simply makes clothes – and there aren't many designers like that. But the kind of clothing we make is now being acclaimed – finally. Designers like Kim Jones, who are working for big brands, are drawing attention towards us. Street fashion has become more influential and finally reached the level of 'high fashion'. But both Nobu-san and I have designed like this from the start. For me, it's never been about just designing clothes.

Nobu: I realized I wanted to be a designer in my teens and started my brand in my early 20s. My career will have lasted 35 years next year. I am getting older and I have witnessed a number of changes in fashion, but I have managed to survive. But thinking of Jonio's 'finally', I feel that the time has finally come when I can enjoy things again, including the city of Tokyo, from zero – now, finally. It may be rude to put it this way, but what the top-class, foreign, prestigious brands are doing now is what we have been doing since the beginning; they have finally started doing the same thing as us. We have been creating street fashion for a long time and now, traditional companies, leading companies, and world-renowned high-fashion brands are using the same ideas. Things are becoming interesting again. 'Finally!' as Jonio said. Here in Japan, if we think about who has been essential in Japanese fashion, then what Jonio has done at Undercover is significant. Without Undercover, fashion in Tokyo would not have won the respect it has now, especially from European designers. We already had [Rei] Kawakubo-san, but we had only her. Jonio's entry into the overseas market greatly increased the level of knowledge about Tokyo and its subcultures. Younger designers in Belgium and New York emulated and followed him. From the beginning, I've never wanted to grow my business into something big; I've wanted to stay in a grey zone where I can design for many years as part of a small team. Jonio has continued to present his collections on the prestigious stages, though, and sport brands have also approached him. We are in totally different places. Jonio has risen to the top in Tokyo and I think this stimulates young people the most.

Jun: I take a different approach from Nobu-san. I discovered Hysteric Glamour right after I first encountered Comme des Garçons. Both of them shocked me in the same way. So did Vivienne Westwood. She had already been making culture with Malcolm McLaren; mixing music, fashion, and so on. Nobu was doing the same. While being inspired by those brands, I was also looking at haute couture; I wanted to mix all those different elements that inspired me. And Paris was the place that made me think about how and where I could present such designs. I think Raf Simons is the same as me; he is also turning a culture into clothes. There are only a few designers around doing such things. Now, of course, Virgil [Abloh] has been appointed as men's creative director for Louis Vuitton. He is still not mature enough as a designer, but he can create big movements through his communication – and it's very telling that such a person can today work for Louis Vuitton. There are both arguments for and against, but now is such a different era from the past. Some people consider popularity to be more important. Those kids like Virgil who have been influenced by us are at the centre of things now. I do think they still need to work harder, but if they do their best, it'll be great. We were the same back then. Anyway, people like Nobu, Raf, Vivienne and me who mix music, movies and art into our creations are peculiar in this industry.

I have a quick question about 'streetwear', the word. When you first started, people didn't call this style of clothing streetwear and I find it such a strange expression. I mean, when did people even start saying streetwear?

Nobu: In the 1990s, Stüssy and Supreme emerged and raised the profile of so-called 'sidewalk culture', which was represented by skateboards and graffiti, and came in from America. It may not have originated there, but it was popularized in America. The music I was listening to was different, but I was in the same generation as that culture. It led to Urahara[10] culture. Before that, the DC style prevailed. All that happened so that street culture could appear in Japan. Then young people embraced that culture.

Jun: Like Stüssy and Supreme, I make clothes out of the things I was influenced by, such as music. Rebellious clothes are born out of rebellious music. When I started showing in Paris, journalists called us a 'street brand from Tokyo'; even now I am introduced as a street brand. But to me, street and *mode* are the same.

Nobu: Street or punk, everything is good. Music, a book you read, a design, all of that can change your fashion. So it's simple – with what concept do you make clothes? There are conventional ways to design, but if you stick to them, like learning only from old fashion magazines, all you do is change the shape of Dior clothing or American military clothes. If you incorporate different things, such as the music you hear, that will result in a change. There is a way of thinking at a higher level like Kawakubo-san, but it is also OK to apply that idea to casual clothes.

You two incorporated that new idea and your cultural inspirations, and expressed it all earlier than anyone else.

Jun: Nobu-san was the first person who did that. Other designers may have had musical influences, but Nobu was the one who concretely made clothes incorporating cultural elements.

Nobu: It is not difficult. When I started studying clothes at vocational school, military fashion was the trend in the Paris collections, and women were wearing jodhpurs and knee-high boots. My design already included street elements, and vintage clothing, so I was like, 'Why don't we take a men's MA-1,[11] and then make it very short and very tight for women?' I started this way, so in this sense, it could be said I was the first. But the next year I saw similar clothing at Gaultier, worn by Madonna. I may have been the first to do it, but it spread and it's nothing special now.

Jun: Streetwear has now taken root and no one can deny its influence. That kid who was listening to all those types of music back then made some clothes and he has finally been recognized by high-fashion brands.

Nobu: This movement must have already been seen in the 1960s and 1970s, but fashion was then created under separate anti-government, religious, anti-racist or women's liberation influences. But in the current era, everything has merged. People listen to hip-hop, rock, folk, popular songs. Things have finally reached this borderless level.

Jun: Basically, I have created and shown clothes in the spirit of 'anything goes' – there is no high or low culture or design anymore. At the beginning, I was criticized for that. But now, mainstream fashion is also about 'anything goes'. My generation was raised in a more mixed culture than Nobu-san's. Hip-hop appeared and was mixed with rock, hardcore and more. And now we can no longer even tell what's in the mix, what genre anything is. Mixing started in my lifetime. I was lucky because I understand the process of mixed things together. My encounter with the London crew was meant to happen, and it was important. There was Hiroshi and Nobu-san...

Nobu: …and James [Lebon], Mark [Lebon], and the Buffalo Collective.[12] Not forgetting [Christopher] Nemeth, Judy Blame,[13] Shawn [Stüssy], and others.

These pioneers led to street fashion in Japan.

Nobu: Honestly, if our peers in Tokyo had not communicated with Michael and other people in London during the second half of the 1980s and the early 1990s, we would not have come so far. The momentum at that time was a fashion revolution.

Jun: I agree.

Nobu: It was like the Meiji Restoration.[14]

Jun: If we had not established the strong relationship with them, street fashion would not have expanded as it has now. Stüssy is a good example; it spread worldwide from the London team and Hiroshi.

Nobu: That is why this is categorized as street fashion – the reason lies in London. Street fashion is unthinkable in

'Neither Nobu-san nor I make clothes from nothing. We create by using the things that influence us: music, movies, things we just think are cool.'

'What the prestigious foreign brands are doing now is what we've been doing since the beginning; they have finally started doing the same thing as us.'

LA, because everyone drives; nobody walks on the street in LA. It could not be in New York, either, because the city consists of blocks rather than streets. So, we have London. This street, that street – and fashion is different on each street. Street fashion derived from there. I thought skateboards made street fashion, but I was wrong. London is where street fashion originated.
Jun: Music and culture linked up to make street fashion. Skateboard culture is a bit different. London is especially linked to the street, when you consider things like the Mods on Carnaby Street.

London was really influential.
Jun: In the 1970s and 1980s, Tokyo and London were more underground.
Nobu: In the 1960s and 1970s, Tokyo was kind of like a third city. It wasn't a main world city; everybody just followed the trends that came from America and Europe.
Jun: We were following, but we still created some original underground music and culture.
Nobu: Japan is an unusual country. It's the same size as California and the equivalent of half the US population lives here. It's really different from American or European or even other Asian countries. Japan is just an island, a little island the same size as California.[15]

And because it's an island, it's a different culture. I have a question about the word Urahara. Did anybody ever use it or was it just journalists?
Jun: Urahara is basically around here.
Nobu: It's behind Omotesando and the fashion area, which was kind of expensive, and rent used to be cheap around this area. So for young people, it was easier to rent places. The main part of Harajuku is from Harajuku Station to Meiji Street and then here is Omotesando, right? And Urahara is the area kind of behind or *ura*.
Jun: Nigo and I opened the Nowhere store down there.

How is Japanese street culture evolving? How do you two feel about Tokyo or Japan's present street culture?
Jun: Street fashion includes everything, so I cannot tell who does what and what is 'street' any more. All the brands are unknown to me. Later today, we are going to have some drinks and many young people will come. So I'll be able to witness what that current mixture is about in Tokyo.
Nobu: If I reject what's happening now, it's the same as people who rejected punk when punk was in fashion, or hippy culture at the time of the hippies, or the beatniks in the 1950s. We are living in a completely SNS [social networking sites] culture. It's like how cyberpunk novels by J. G. Ballard and *Neuromancer*[16] from the late-1970s to the mid-1980s became the sources of inspiration for the people who helped make Apple and AI appear – it cannot be helped. Without punks, for example, we would not see people with tattoos working in banks.

Both of you sell your brands' products at home and abroad. In terms of both domestic and global fashion, what is it like working as a Japanese designer?
Jun: I've made designs that only a Japanese person could create, by, for example, mixing up cultures. At first, I wasn't conscious of creating specifically Japanese designs, but after I started working overseas, people pointed it out and made me aware of it. As I often mix cultures, I now know what is more of a Japanese characteristic. This makes me confident.
Nobu: No matter what other people out there are thinking, my final goal is to make clothing in Japan. I have no intention of making Japanese clothing in a foreign country. It could be possible. I could make them in China and sell them worldwide. That may be a business plan. But my opinion is that Japan is a very small country with many fine small factories. While I can still work with them, I don't want to eliminate that possibility. Clothes may be expensive, but these people have to make a living, too, so as long as I can get by, it's all good.

All the stories you've talked about so far are now connected: Hysteric influenced Jonio-san, and led to Urahara, while people from England connected everyone here.
Jun: Until recently there were not strong links between people in the fashion industry, but we have all started to link up in recent years.
Nobu: I think we have finally entered the next stage of time in a sense.
Jun: What we have been working on has finally been appreciated worldwide, or has started to exert influence.
Nobu: Fashion lovers in their teens and 20s are wealthier than in the past.

'We already had Rei Kawakubo-san, but Jonio's entry into the overseas market greatly increased the level of knowledge about Tokyo and its subcultures.'

Undercover's influence on these highly fashion-conscious people is significant. Jonio's label shows in Paris, which increases its global presence, and he really maintains that position. I can name only Jonio, after Kawakubo-san, who has achieved that.

You've been sharing and interacting for 25 years now. Is this sense of collaboration a mark of your generation of designers?
Jun: Designers in Tokyo like me, Nobu-san, [Takahiro] Miyashita, and others all get along really well. We are always exchanging information. We are on good terms. Collaboration is nothing special for us. We get along well, so we say, 'Let's create something together'. Overseas, it seems inconceivable that designers could get on so well; they're often like enemies. Japanese designers, at least those around me, are not like that at all. This idea of working together has finally started spreading in the fashion world outside of Japan. This may be thanks to Kim and other designers working for big brands collaborating with brands like Supreme, for example.

You share and resonate with each other, while being rivals at the same time.
Jun: We have no sense of rivalry.
Nobu: Confrontation is of no benefit. A long time ago, people were in conflict with each other over territory, but now, countries have been established. If we're in conflict with each other today, all we'll get out of it is stress. But if we get along, it is better to help each other. We are living on a small island, so we have to do this.
Nobu: Actually, we do have a punch up once a month. [All laugh] When we go drinking once in a while…

What do you like or dislike about Tokyo?
Nobu: I like Tokyo very much, and I am learning to like it more and more. To be honest, when I was around 20, I felt an aversion to Tokyo. I used to think, 'Why wasn't I born in London or New York?' I didn't even like the people who had come to Tokyo from the rest of Japan. When I was in my 20s, I just didn't like them. But because I started my brand, I couldn't live anywhere else, and now I'm less interested in other cities…
Jun: There is nothing that I dislike about Tokyo. I liked it from the beginning. I sometimes think I'd like to live in London, but…
Nobu: Even if I am alone here, I can do everything. If I were alone in London, I would commit suicide. I can't find anything I dislike about Tokyo. Maybe electricity poles and pylons. If they were removed, it would be much better.
Jun: If you compare the cityscape in Paris and that in Tokyo, you may think Paris is greater. But I think Tokyo is just fine. Tokyo has first-class culture, as well as many nonsensical things and traditional stuff – everything is mixed.
Nobu: The reactors' meltdown problem has not been fixed.[17] I hope the groundwater will not rise.
Jun: Ahead of the Olympics,[18] the government tries to hide the problem and pretend nothing has happened.
Nobu: There must be something that can be done. It's a pity. There are people who were evacuated from their homes after the meltdown and still haven't returned. We have more important things to be doing than getting involved in the Tokyo Olympics.
Jun: After the earthquake disaster, SNS happened to spread wide. Right after that, our business plunged, and I was hit hard. The government manipulated information behind the scenes to distract us from the problem, while emphasizing the Olympics. People say business will change after the Olympics, but that's not right. Because if another nuclear power plant explodes, that would be the end.

1. Throughout this interview Jun Takahashi is referred to as Jonio. This nickname comes from his days as the singer of the Tokyo Sex Pistols when he was the Japanese Johnny Rotten.

2. Ashikaga, a city of 150,000 inhabitants in Tochigi Prefecture, is approximately 80 kilometres north of central Tokyo.

3. Takasaki is 40 kilometres west of Ashikaga.

4. The Kanto region, on Japan's largest island Honshu, is made up of seven prefectures: Tokyo, Chiba, Kanagawa, Gunma, Tochigi, Saitama and Ibaraki.

5. *DC burando* or 'designer and character brands' was clothing made using artisanal methods for niche markets. Despite generally ignoring any sense of commercial imperatives, DC brands like Ozone Community became popular in the early 1980s as Japan's economy began to boom. Other early DC designers include Rei Kawakubo, Yohji Yamamoto and Issey Miyake.

6. Established in 1923, Bunka Fashion College was Japan's first dressmaking school; it is now based in a 21-storey building in Shibuya, Tokyo. Alumni include the designers including Hiroko Koshino, Yohji Yamamoto and Chisato Tsumori.

7. British streetwear legend Michael Kopelman opened his distribution company Gimme Five in 1989 importing previously unavailable and unknown brands from the US and Japan. An early supporter of Stüssy, he became the brand's UK director and part of what became known as the International Stüssy Tribe, which also included James Jebbia (founder of Supreme), Hiroshi Fujiwara (future designer of Goodenough) and Luca Benini (who later created Slam Jam). In 1998, he opened a store in London's Soho called Hit and Run – later renamed The Hideout – stocking the best streetwear from around the world, much of it from Japanese brands such as A Bathing Ape, Visvim and Neighbourhood. The store closed in 2014.

8. Kiryu, a city of 115,000 in Gunma prefecture, is 15 kilometres northwest of Ashikaga; it is Jun Takahashi's hometown.

9. Designer and musician Hiroshi Fujiwara – the 'godfather of Harajuku' – founded clothing labels Goodenough and Fragment Design, and fragrance brand retaW.

10. Urahara is a shortening of 'ura-Harajuku', which means 'hidden Harajuku'; it refers to a small, four-block section of Harajuku generally considered ground zero for Japanese streetwear. Nowhere, Jun Takahashi and Nigo's store, was in Urahara.

11. The MA-1 flight jacket was originally created in the early 1950s to replace the B15 flight jacket that had been in use since 1944 with the US Air Force. While the design of the 'bomber jacket', as it is commonly called, has been tinkered with over the years, its basic shape has remained the same making it a design classic and a long-time fashion basic. In the UK, it was adopted by both Mods and punks in the 1960s and 1970s.

12. Buffalo was an underground, multicultural, multidisciplinary creative collective, founded by stylist Ray Petri and active in London between 1984 and 1989. Members included photographers (Jamie Morgan and Cameron McVey), models (a teenage Naomi Campbell and Nick Kamen), and musicians (Neneh Cherry, whose hit 'Buffalo Stance' was a shout-out to the collective and co-written by Morgan and McVey). Petri died in 1989, but the collective's influence on contemporary fashion remains paradoxically both enormous and underestimated.

13. Judy Blame was born Chris Barnes. After a childhood in Spain and Devon, south-west England, he embraced punk (buying clothes from Vivienne Westwood in her shop Seditionaries), then New Romanticism (he was a key player on the scene based at legendary clubs Blitz and Heaven), and began making jewellery from found objects. He later also became a renowned stylist working with *The Face* and *i-D*, and musicians including Boy George, Björk and Massive Attack. In 2016, a retrospective of his career, *Never Again*, was held at the ICA in London. Blame died on February 19, 2018, aged 58.

14. The Meiji Restoration (1868-1912) was the period of rapid industrialization, modernization and Westernization in Japan initiated and led by Emperor Meiji. It began after imperial rule replaced the shogunate and the country was opened up to the outside world after two centuries of self-enforced isolation.

15. Japan is actually 46,008km^2 smaller than California (377,962km^2 vs. 423,970km^2), while its population is not quite half that of the United States (127 million vs. 324 million).

16. US novelist William Gibson's *Neuromancer* is considered the ur-text of the cyberpunk genre. Originally published on July 1, 1984, it was a film-noir-influenced prediction of an environmentally damaged dystopia dominated by faceless corporations, global computer networks – what Gibson called 'cyberspace' – and virtual reality. Gibson famously wrote his novel of technological domination on a 1937 manual typewriter.

17. After the tsunami that hit Japan on March 11, 2011 caused the shutdown of cooling pumps at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, its three reactors went into meltdown, causing the plant to explode. It has continued to leak radioactivity into sea- and groundwater and the air since then.

18. The summer Olympic Games will be held in Tokyo in 2020.

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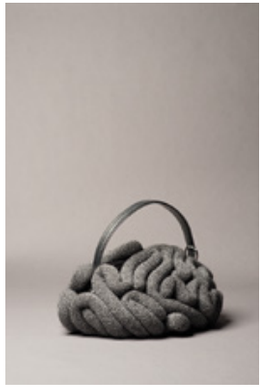
16. Undercover's debut solo menswear runway show, Spring/Summer 2010, entitled *Less But Better*, inspired by Dieter Rams Pitti Immagine Uomo 76, Florence, June 2009.
17. Jun Takahashi presenting Undercover's Autumn/Winter 2010-2011 collection, entitled *Avakareta Life*.
18. Pieces from Undercover's Autumn/Winter 2013-2014 collection, entitled *Anatomicouture*.
19. A look from Undercover's Autumn/Winter 2014-2015 womenswear collection runway show, entitled *Cold Blood*, Paris, February 2014.
20. Undercover's Autumn/Winter 2013-2014 womenswear collection runway show, entitled *Anatomicouture*, Paris, March 2013.



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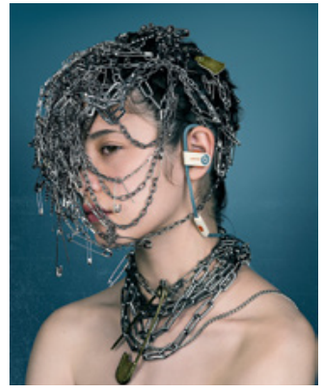

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21. Bag from Undercover's Autumn/Winter 2007-2008 womenswear collection, *Untitled*.
22. Undercover × Hello Kitty iPhone case, 2014.
23. Beats by Dr. Dre × Undercover Powerbeats2 Wireless Earphones, June 2016.
24. Jun Takahashi and Thom Yorke in the Shepherd Undercover line, 2016. Photograph by Taro Mizutani
25. Jun Takahashi running in the NikeLab Gyakusou Holiday 2016 collection.

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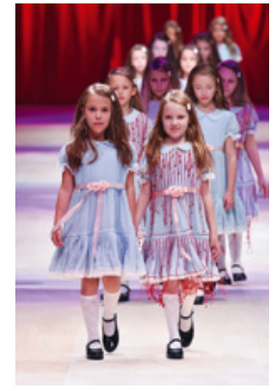

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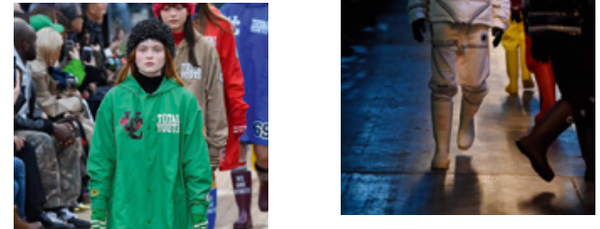

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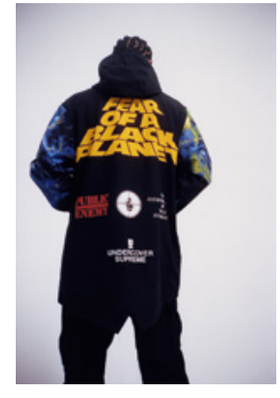

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26. 10.20 sacai / Undercover Spring/Summer 2018 show, Tokyo.
27. Cindy Sherman reversible T-shirt/georgette dress from Undercover's Spring/Summer 2018 collection, entitled *Janus*.
28. Sadie Sink closing the Undercover Autumn/Winter 2018-2019 womenswear collection runway show, entitled *We Are Infinite*, Paris, March 2018.
29.Undercover's Autumn/Winter 2018-2019 menswear collection runway show, entitled *Order-Disorder*, Pitti Uomo Immagine 93, Florence, Jaunary 2018.
30. Supreme® / Undercover / Public Enemy Spring 2018 collection. Photograph by Bolade Banjo

We Are Infinite & Order-Disorder

Deciphering Jun Takahashi's Autumn/Winter 2018 Undercover season.

By Tim Blanks
Photographs by Norbert Schoerner
Styling by Jun Takahashi

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Youth

Photographer's assistant: Keiichi Shirakawa. Production: Laladand and Toru Hosaka at Iino Mediapro. Production coordinator: Chieri Hazu.
Creative consultant: Juanita Bovill. Digital artist: Elise Franceschi at dayfornightlab. Hair and make-up: Katsuya Kamo. Models: Ilona Manechur at Donna Models and Masahiro Shimoji. Mask by Wintercroft. Mask assembly: Kumiko Noda. Mask customization: Katsuya Kamo.
Special thanks: Magnif Zinebocho and all the karaoke performers

On March 2, 2018, Jun Takahashi showed *We Are Infinite*, his womenswear collection for Autumn/Winter 2018. His title, which he took from the closing monologue of the film, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*,[1] was a perfect summation of Takahashi's theme, the light and shadow of tumultuous teenage years, and a continuation of his long-term obsession with extremes. The soundtrack, selected as ever by the designer himself, was the consummate aural complement, ranging from the sweet-16 of Paul Anka's 'Put Your Head on My Shoulder'[2] to one of Julee Cruise's eerie hymns to David Lynch's twisted vision of adolescence.[3]

The high-school culture of *We Are Infinite* also reflected the fascination with Americana that Takahashi shares with Japanese culture. Jazz, blue jeans, gas jockeys, bobby-soxers, rockers, preppies: handfuls of archetypes are regularly curated, mutated, filtered through the alien lens of Japanese fashion. If adolescent rites of passage initiated one of Jun's more fetishistic reflections on the heartland, there was no denying the genuine emotional charge of the finale, when all his models walked in collegiate parkas to Bowie's '"Heroes"', echoing the most uplifting sequence in *Perks*. Later, Takahashi told me it was the bittersweetness of such a time in a young person's life that attracted him, the uncertain face-off between the present and the future. But while he was designing his collection, he had no real idea how much more bitter the real world was about to get.

Two weeks before Takahashi's presentation, 19-year-old Nikolas Cruz walked into Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida with an AR-15 semi-automatic assault rifle and murdered 14 students and 3 staff members. Unappeased by the thoughts and prayers of ethically compromised, morally bankrupt politicians, the kids who were the targets mobilized in anger, making plans for a nationwide march for their lives to challenge the orthodoxies of America's out-of-control gun culture.

Of course, Takahashi's concept had been in place months before, but the coincidence darkened the shadows of *We Are Infinite*. His meditation on high school concluded with an all-black passage of formal sportswear – a shawl-collared parka, a frock coat – that post-Parkland, made me think of funerals or proms that would never be attended. Though it wasn't all darkness. I saw the '"Heroes"' of his finale as the resilient young survivors taking a stand for sanity. More words from the *Perks* monologue: 'This one moment when you know that you're not a sad story. You are alive.' Which was also the moment that those kids realized monsters are real.

Maybe Takahashi was taken aback when I told him all this. Unsurprisingly, he insisted there was no way it would be possible to address such a tragedy with a collection of clothing. That still didn't shake my conviction that there aren't many other fashion designers today whose work could carry such a weight, however unwittingly. Over the years, his clothes have been fearlessly conceptual, sometimes wilfully so. It's long been Takahashi's method to probe the hidden, wayward – even perverse – recesses of the mind. When he was a child, his parents would lock him in the coal shed when he misbehaved. The darkness of that small, spooky place nibbles at the edges of his psyche.

'Since I was little, "fun" and "beautiful" weren't enough. If comedians were just funny, they didn't fascinate me. They were more interesting if they had the other side too, if they were cynical as well. I tried to find out what was behind.' You can't miss how often masks crop up in his collections. (His Spring 2018 collection was titled *Janus: The Two-Faced God*.) He has called himself 'normal on the outside, alien on the inside'. Which explains why he labelled his business Undercover – anonymous, secretive, hinting at taboo – when he started it in 1990.

Takahashi has called himself 'normal on the outside, alien on the inside'. Which explains the name Undercover – anonymous, secretive, hinting at taboo.

Takahashi also claims he likes being frightened; he says he has a lot of nightmares. They seep into his collections, through the music and the lighting. He intentionally avoided a dark side with *We Are Infinite*, but when he saw the finished collection he realized he hadn't escaped the darkness: 'Youth was the story of the show, and there is always pain, always difficulties with that story.'

If *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* was one take on troubled adolescence, Takahashi drew on another, when he cast Sadie Sink, the young actress from Series 2 of *Stranger Things*, one of his recent favourites, to open and close the show. Their connection was actually a little more prosaic than it at first seemed. Long-time Takahashi collaborator Nike was using Sink in a campaign and the company brought her to the designer's attention. *We Are Infinite* was almost complete at that point, though Nike had no idea what Takahashi's concept was. They were thinking maybe a shoot. He instantly shot back: 'No, I want to make her the main character in the show.' It was a multilayered moment. Maybe even meta.

Over and over again, I'm thinking of David Lynch, and his unerring ability to isolate the unsettling in the familiar. On one finger, Takahashi wears a ruby-eyed fox-head ring by Gucci, a gift from his wife. On another, he has a ring with the symbol of the Black Lodge, from *Twin Peaks*.[4] He's halfway through the latest season of Lynch's series and when I inadvertently launch into spoilers (though that is virtually impossible with *Twin Peaks*), he says, quickly, 'Don't tell me'. He considers Lynch a genius, 'next level'. There's a clear compatibility. 'I like to make people nervous,' he agrees. 'I hope to make people feel that through my show.' He acknowledges it's a challenge to scare people with fashion, but he felt *We Are Infinite* had something unsettling about it, 'when you don't know what's going to happen next'. How Lynchian is *that*!

Those words could be inscribed on Takahashi's tomb. Which is why there's one question in particular I've always wanted to ask him. How does he choose his subject matter? Surrealist Czech filmmaker Jan Švankmajer.[5] Jazz pianist Bill Evans. Collagist Matthieu Bourel.[6] He's curator as whirling dervish. Relatively familiar, but still arcane, names like Trent Reznor or Lou Reed emerge from the reference points like old friends. Undercover is entirely a reflection of Takahashi's own tastes. He designs everything by himself, graphics included. He writes all the text that decorates his clothes. (On *We Are Infinite*'s parkas: 'We are who we are for a lot of reasons.') No assistants, no stylist, no musical director. 'I enjoy what I create. I take care of every part of my creation.'

He designs everything by himself – graphics included – and writes all the text that decorates his clothes. No assistants, no stylist, no musical director.

'I've always got something I'm influenced by and I want to express that,' Takahashi says. 'I want to isolate one subject, take it all the way, give it new meaning. It's like giving someone a record they don't know that you love because you think it's so cool.' My own favourite illustration of this process is Takahashi's exhumation of New York art-rock band Television's 1978 album *Adventure*[7] for his Spring/Summer 2015 menswear collection. He was eight years old on its release. Nevertheless, his discovery of it years after the fact left him lamenting the fact no one listened to it at the time: 'I don't understand how such a good record with such a good album cover wasn't popular.' So Takahashi did what any ardent fan with his creative outlet would do. He built a fashion collection around the band, their songs and their artwork. A literal but lovely tribute, charmingly unselfconscious in its lack of concern about wilful obscurity or holier-than-thou coolness. ('The UK and the US are too cool,' Takahashi mutters.)

Three seasons later, he did something similar with the Belgian artist Michaël Borremans, the arcana this time less related to the inspiration's obscurity than its unlikeliness in a fashion setting. Borremans' sombre, eerie portraits have cast him as a 21st-century Velasquez and when Takahashi encountered his work in an exhibition, he instantly felt a kinship: 'Everything for me is thinking about fashion and design and I was already thinking about how I could get these images into my clothes.' Borremans consented; Takahashi reproduced a handful of images on parkas, coats and sweatshirts, to the unmitigated joy of Borremans aficionados everywhere who can't afford the seven-figure price tags and who could relate to Takahashi's own sentiment: 'If I find something I really love and make clothes with it, I can have it with me all the time. It makes me happy to have it very close, very personal to me.' Not everyone says yes to him. It would be betraying a confidence to mention a very big fish who got away. I could shed a tear at how inevitably wonderful the result would have been.

At the end of the 1980s, Takahashi emerged from a cocoon of punk into life in Tokyo as Jonio, the rooster-haired front man of the Tokyo Sex Pistols. He's now in his late 40s, slight with a studious look that might have something to do with hair that is slightly greyed. Maybe he's done that deliberately, to look a little older, to counter an innate boyishness. We're conducting our conversation with the assistance of his right-hand woman and translator Chieri Hazu, but every so often Takahashi injects his own Anglicisms. As, for instance, when I'm cackhandedly trying to explain Rei Kawakubo's recent proselytization on behalf of the contrary and vital value of camp and her conviction that 'so-called styles such as punk have lost their original rebel spirit'. 'Why do you think she said that?' Takahashi wonders. I suggest it might be because punk got old. 'It doesn't get old or new,' he counters. 'What I got from it is always there. It was shocking for me at the time, and it never changes.' He looks at me, raises an eyebrow, and murmurs, in English, 'Punk's not dead.'

Jonio is no more. Now Jun only sings when he's doing

karaoke with his friends. Last time, he chose '"Heroes"'; he laughs when he remembers how bad it was. 'To listen to it is amazing, to sing it so difficult and boring. David's voice makes that song so moving. I realized again how great he was.' Maybe there's something of the kindred spirit, like Lynch, again. What sustains and excites Takahashi more than anything continues to be his creative process. 'Sounds boring,' he says in English. Not at all. It sounds impressively disciplined. He comes to the office every day at 11, leaves at 7, doesn't bring his work home with him and takes weekends off. Obsessive? 'I like to be scheduled,' Takahashi says. 'Without plans, I get lost.' His early training in graphic design has made him a stickler for detail, but he insists that he's not obsessed with precision. ('It's not like everything has to be straight.') Which means there is also a roughness in his work, an unfinished quality, cracks in the perfection into which dark shadows and wayward sensuality can creep.

Perhaps that's the perseverance of punk in Takahashi's career, as raw attitude. Nowhere was the name he chose for the store he opened in 1993.[8] 'We make noise, not clothes' has long been the company slogan, even if that particular message was eventually muted by the elaborate, highly stylized-bordering-on-rococo spectacles Takahashi staged for his womenswear. That is all about to change. *We Are Infinite* was Takahashi's last womenswear presentation for the foreseeable future. From June, his menswear will take its turn on the catwalk, with the strong likelihood that Takahashi will let the punk rule the poet.

He's long thought that it was more challenging to make a men's show interesting: 'Womenswear is not something I would wear myself, so I'm thinking of a story, and the characters in that story.' Cinematic, in fact, like the movies he wishes he had time to make. Only in the last few years has Takahashi found the confidence to put his menswear centre stage, as it were. He claims he was intimidated by all the rules. 'Things have to be *this* way or *that* way, and I don't like that,' he explains. 'But I didn't know how to break the preconception, how to find a balance between breaking the rules and also following them. I've finally figured out how.' Takahashi now wants to parade his solution on a runway, even as he cryptically adds that he's still not sure if there'll be a story as there has been with the women's shows.

Which mean that his confidence must have been received an added boost in January this year with a show at the Pitti Uomo trade fair in Florence. Takahashi and his friend Takahiro Miyashita,[9] who designs as TAKAHIROMIYASHITATheSoloist., were invited as special guests. 'We had the theme already: *Order-Disorder*. It's really the story of now, how we created the computer, and artificial intelligence is taking over. We made it; we have to deal with it.'

For his half of the show, Takahashi took *2001: A Space Odyssey* as a starting point. (Stanley Kubrick is another of his pillars.) The alien monolith from the movie loomed at the end of the catwalk while his models walked in sportswear embellished with film stills and words that mirrored the plot: HUMAN ERROR, COMPUTER MALFUNCTION, and the name of the iconic AI gone wrong, HAL 9000. Takahashi's soundtrack, always a signifier, included Joy Division's 'Atmosphere' and Kraftwerk's 'Radioactivity'. There was a dystopian edge to the presentation, but it also offered ceremonial evidence that Takahashi is just as capable of offering a narrative in the context of a menswear show as he was with womenswear. In fact, his evocation of the ambiguous relationship between human and machine struck me as a companion piece with the sublime women's show he staged for Autumn/Winter 2017.

'If I find something I love and make clothes with it, I can have it with me all the time. It makes me happy to have it very close, very personal to me.'

The full title of that one was *But Beautiful III Utopie: A New Race Living in Utopia*. To a Thom Yorke soundtrack, Takahashi unveiled a vision of a society of 10 separate, ornately dressed tribes, among them 'Aristocracy', 'Young Rebels', 'Agitators', 'Soldiers', and 'Monarchy'. If the set-up sounded hierarchical and unstable, Takahashi actually intended to depict a world where all classes were equal, a utopia where the idea of class had been destroyed. 'AI doesn't care what class you are,' he said. 'It's a different level of new experience. But how we are going to face it is another matter.' Humanity united in a face-off with AI? Was this Takahashi's idea of optimism? 'Not completely,' he answered, 'considering what's happening in the world. It's a warning of what's happening. I have two kids. We have to survive some way, but it's so difficult to avoid all problems.'

In 'New Species', the last of his Utopie's 10 tribes, Takahashi offered an update on an idea integral to his work all along. 'I like to make hybrids. For my "new species", I combined humans and bugs. In reality, it would be a horror movie.' Or maybe, ultimately, a guarantee of survival. A real new race, living in a utopia that we would scarcely be able to recognize as such. I was recently overwhelmed by Alex Garland's *Annihilation*,[10] and it's only now that it strikes me how much its intimidating, alien beauty is the kind of elaborate hybrid fantasia about which Takahashi has dreams – or nightmares.

'It's possible to do more in fashion than people do,' he insists. 'Fashion can be the reason for a person to change, maybe even the reason to change some part of society. It depends on the person. It changed everything for me.' One of his most appealing qualities is the sense of reflection Takahashi exudes, like someone who has led a rackety life and come to this quiet place. (I was going to compare him to Iggy Pop, but Pop seems a little more *amused* by everything.) He thinks about legacy, for instance: 'It's valuable to leave something. I always wanted to combine street and high fashion. I wanted to show people there is a way to do things like me. And I can leave a mark by showing in Paris' – which he has been doing since Rei Kawakubo persuaded him to make the move in 2002 – 'it's more than just designing clothes. I'm showing a world, and if you can name it, it becomes one style, your style. That's my dream.'

'I felt that too in Martin Margiela,' Takahashi adds. It was a Margiela show in Tokyo in the late 1980s that originally awakened him to the potential of fashion. Since he's been in Paris on this visit, he's taken in the designer's retrospective at the Musée Galliera: 'The power, the energy of those clothes. I want to do that for myself. It's difficult to find something that gives you that.' Takahashi is thinking ahead to his men's show in June. The little monsters in Alessandro Michele's most recent Gucci show have set him wondering.[11] 'The baby dragon was such quality,' he murmurs dreamily. 'If I had that kind of money, maybe…'

With the change he is making, it's clear that Takahashi wants to address a core frustration he has with his business. 'People in the West have a very different idea of Undercover than people in Japan,' he acknowledges. 'European journalists understand me in the way I want to be understood.' Meaning in Japan he is forever the street designer who launched Nowhere with Nigo, he of A Bathing Ape, and helped make the Harajuku district what it is today.[12] 'That's the kind of image I have with people who are now in their 30s or 40s, even professional journalists, even those crazy fans of Undercover from back in the 1990s. They're, like, *religious*. They don't get it when I do something new.'

Takahashi loves collaborations. He *excels* at them: Supreme, Nike, Uniqlo. But they have also consolidated the preconception. Last year he broke the mould by linking up with Chitose Abe of Sacai,[13] so far along the fashion spectrum from his previous *collaborateurs* that she might as well be a couturier. Some of the old school didn't understand why, but he believed it created something interesting he wouldn't be able to do on his own. It was a smart move. *The Senken*, an English-language paper that reports in depth on the Japanese fashion industry, runs a biannual buzz chart tracking which designers are hot or not, both in the domestic and international markets, as much in terms of popular profile as actual units shifted. Sacai invariably tops menswear and womenswear for Japan. This year, Undercover was second to Sacai on the men's charts. Number 2 with a bullet! It was all but a leap into the stratosphere for Takahashi.

And this *success d'estime* surely accounts, at least *partly*, for his decision to let womenswear take a backseat for a while. The auteur is feeling his oats. 'It's something I am doing more for myself.' Not particularly apropos of that, I'm just going to put it out there: Jun Takahashi is the David Lynch of fashion. And we don't know what's going to happen next.

1. *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, a story of sexual abuse, mental-health issues and the difficulties of being a teenager, was released in 2012. Starring Emma Watson, Logan Lerman and Ezra Miller, it was directed by Stephen Chbosky from a screenplay adapted from his own 1999 novel. 'We are infinite', the name of the Undercover collection, is the movie's final line.

2. Paul Anka was born in Ottawa, Canada, in 1941. He formed his first band, the Bobbysoxers, aged 13. His first hit, 'Diana', came in 1957; 'Put Your Head on My Shoulder' was released in 1959 and went to number two in the US. He also wrote songs for other artists including Buddy Holly and Tom Jones, but perhaps his greatest claim to immortality is having written the English lyrics to 'My Way', an adaptation of the French original, 'Comme d'habitude' written by Claude François and Jacques Revaux.

3. Julee Cruise's whispery voice – usually described as 'ethereal' – first came to public prominence in 1986 when she collaborated with Angelo Badalamenti and David Lynch on 'Mysteries of Love' for the director's *Blue Velvet*. The trio was reunited in 1990 when Cruise sang 'Falling', the song that plays over the titles of Lynch's TV series *Twin Peaks*. Cruise also appeared in the series' 2017 reboot, but was reportedly unhappy with the result, after Lynch placed the end credits over her performance. She has since written on her Facebook page: 'I'm done. and I could care Less about TP.'

4. In *Twin Peaks*, the Black Lodge is a location in another dimension accessed through a portal at Glastonbury Grove in the woods outside the town of Twin Peaks. A person must feel great fear to enter the lodge, which contains spaces including the Red Room and 'inhabitants' such as the Man from Another Place and serial-killer spirits MIKE and BOB.

5. Born in Prague in 1934, Jan Švankmajer is a puppeteer, animator and filmmaker renowned for his surrealist vision and avant-garde approach to narrative. He was little known outside of what was then Czechoslovakia until the collapse of the Soviet Union. His most celebrated films are two dark and inventive adaptations of classic sources: *Alice* (1988) from Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, and *Faust*, which reimagined the Faustian pact inside a puppet theatre.

6. 'In collage, I like to watch every picture as the point of departure for a story,' writes French-born, Berlin-based artist Matthieu Borel on his website. 'Various durations, gathered in one. To evoke a fake history or inspire nostalgia for a period in time that never truly existed. Sometimes further to a decision. Mostly random.' The resulting collages, often using vintage photographs and film stills, are striking investigations into visual coherence.

7. Garage-rock-art-punk band Television was the very definition of the late 1970s downtown New York scene. It was founded by Tom Verlaine (described by *Rolling Stone* in 1978, as 'a unique and masterful guitarist who doesn't play lines so much as shape them with a sculptor's deliberation'), Richard Lloyd, Billy Ficca and Richard Hell, although Hell left the band before it released a record. While the band's debut album *Marquee Moon* (1977) became an instant classic, second album *Adventure* was received less enthusiastically. Television did not release another record until 1992.

8. Nowhere was possibly named after the screenprint of a bus showing the destination 'Nowhere', which featured on the back cover of the Sex Pistols' single 'Pretty Vacant'. Created by British artist Jamie Reid, it became a key punk visual. In 2011, Reid was accused by Point-Blank!, a US Situationist group active in early 1970s San Francisco, of copying the image from one of its works. Reid denied the allegation saying it was he who had supplied the image to Point-Blank!

9. Takahiro Miyashita, considered part of the second wave of Japanese designers who followed in the wake of Rei Kawakubo at Comme des Garçons, Issey Miyake and Yohji Yamamoto, is a designer who, like Takahashi, has always been interested in blending street style with 'high fashion'. He originally designed under the name Number (N)ine, but closed it in 2009. A year later, he created his current label, TAKAHIROMIYASHITATheSoloist.

10. Alex Garland's *Annihilation*, a science-fiction film about scientists exploring a strange mutating zone called the Shimmer, stars Natalie Portman and was released in the US in February 2018. After mixed test-screening results convinced distributor Paramount not to release the film outside of the US, it was sold to Netflix where it can now be seen.

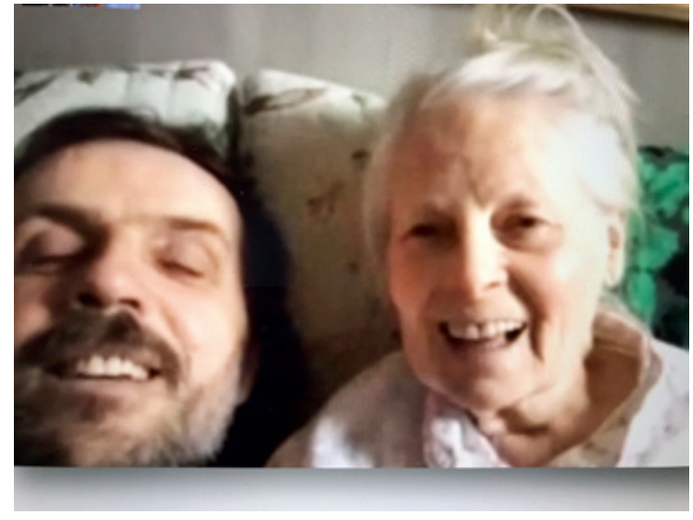
11. Gucci's Autumn/Winter 2018 ready-to-wear catwalk show was set in a brightly lit operating theatre and featured models carrying snakes, chameleons, baby dragons, and for two of them, wax versions of their own heads.

12. Harajuku, a district of a Shibuya in Tokyo, has been considered a centre of Japanese youth culture and fashion since the late 1980s. Home to international and smaller local brands, its proximity to Yoyogi Park, known for its impromptu performances, and its lively atmosphere make it a favourite for Tokyo's *flâneurs*.

13. Chitose Abe founded her label Sacai in 1999 after stints working for both Rei Kawakubo and Junya Watanabe. Since then, she has made it one of Japan's leading fashion brands, while retaining total control of the business. She has gained a reputation for original, smart and well-constructed reworkings of Japanese classics, often by combining two pieces in one garment. The collaboration with Undercover debuted at Tokyo Fashion Week in October 2017.

‘We were always very attracted to each other.’

Vivienne Westwood and Andreas Kronthaler on 30 years of the work/life/love balance.



By Alexander Fury
Photographs by Juergen Teller

Slightly less than 24 hours before their latest catwalk show, fashion designers Vivienne Westwood and Andreas Kronthaler were holed up in an uncharacteristically contemporary building beside their Paris boutique. They were making fashion. Not clothes – the clothes were made, mostly anyway. There were rubber dresses and tweed suits and ballgowns and corsets and platform shoes, quotes from an aesthetic vernacular established by Westwood over almost a half-century of work, almost 30 years of which have been spent alongside Kronthaler. Their latest models were complete, bar a few tweaks, changes and alterations to make sure they fitted in the exact way required for the presentation – which may be normal, distorted or twisted on the body, falling off or rolling down. The final outfits were coming together organically, as lace and taffeta and leopard-print fake-fur garments were interchanged to arresting or amusing effect. Journalists are normally never permitted to watch this period of the creative process at Westwood. It's a rare privilege – and I was very much an interloper. I stayed out of the way. Westwood stood on the sidelines, watching intently, the process mostly handled by 52-year-old Andreas Kronthaler and stylist Sabina Schreder, who studied alongside each other at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna. That was also where Westwood met Kronthaler in 1989. She was a guest professor of fashion; Kronthaler, a 23-year-old from the Austrian Tyrol, was in his first year. Their age difference of 25 years was much commented on when Kronthaler and Westwood's relationship came to wide public attention following their discreet marriage in May 1992. (Westwood's own mother only found out about it in 1993 from newspaper articles.) There is less note paid of it today – now Westwood is 77 – than when they were in their 50s and 30s.

'Before I met Andreas, I used to work in bed, designing clothes with little bits of cloth and pins. I didn't go to work. I worked it all out in the air.'

Yet theirs remains an unusual partnership, in every sense of the term. It is unusual not for trite, traditional reasons of age – Westwood loathes orthodoxy, quoting Bertrand Russell[1] in decrying it as 'the grave of intelligence' – but on many levels, not least its depth and generosity. Westwood and Kronthaler are both romantic and professional partners, living and working together in scenes of striking, yet cosy domesticity, which journalists generally see when they are invited to the label's Battersea studio. The couple live nearby in Clapham Old Town, and both cycle to work, as Westwood did for our meeting a month or so after the show. Perhaps due to the early April British weather, she was late.

'Andreas doesn't speak very much, and he doesn't tell me when I've got an appointment,' she says, by way of explanation, later. 'He did probably tell me this morning. He just came in and mumbled something and went out, and I didn't know. I did know that he was doing an interview, but I didn't hear him say that I was, too. He's going to Italy on Monday – and I don't find that out from him. Somebody else tells me. You can be in mid-conversation with Andreas and he will walk out… Or rather, you can say something to him, wait for a reply, and just sort of keep on waiting, and then he might just walk out the room and you don't see him again for five hours. He's a horse. He's always off.'

The studio space Westwood and Kronthaler share is small, dominated by a large pattern-cutting table strewn with the debris of collections past, with a small kitchenette in a larder cupboard to one side. The carpet is a tartan of the clan MacAndreas, a pattern Westwood designed with tartanmakers Lochcarron of Scotland in 1993 and named after Kronthaler. It featured heavily in that year's Autumn/Winter *Anglomania* collection.

MacAndreas tartan was a tellingly visible acknowledgement of Kronthaler's influence on Westwood's collections – his name is keyed into the very fabric – but only one of the first. While Westwood was the public face – and voice – of the company, she continually credited Kronthaler for work that she termed, then and now, as a collaboration, albeit an unorthodox one. Another significant shift took place in 2016: the collection shown biannually in Paris, Vivienne Westwood's main brand, until then known as Gold Label and often termed 'demi-couture' by Westwood given the complexity of ideas and execution (as well as its price point), was rebranded Andreas Kronthaler for Vivienne Westwood. In the Westwood studio, a month after the latest Paris show, I asked her about her reasoning. 'I definitely wanted Andreas Kronthaler to be acknowledged by everybody for the genius that he is,' she said, with emphasis. She refers to him, often, as a genius, as well as the 'greatest designer in the world'. 'And I absolutely wanted his name to be as well-known as mine. That's what I want. Because it *should* be. I wanted the public to know that.'

Was she also thinking about the future?

'When I die?' Westwood deadpans, one eyebrow raised, then smiles.

Vivienne Westwood's appearance is always noteworthy: today, her lips are outlined in green, matching a fine mohair sweater from the 2017 winter collection designed by Kronthaler; it is painted with a pair of breasts, like a Neolithic cave drawing. It references Westwood's past, her interest in primitive cultures, explored in early 1980s collections with names like *Savage* or her punk 'Tits' T-shirt of 1975, provocatively printed with a photograph of female breasts. The latter was from when Westwood's shop at 430 King's Road in London was called SEX, a name writ large in capital letters wrapped in spanked-flesh-pink rubber above the door. It was conceived in collaboration with the late Malcolm McLaren, her first creative partner with whom she worked between 1971 and 1983, roughly. McLaren didn't really wear their wares back then, but Vivienne did. She served customers in the boutique dressed in a translucent Rubber Johnny bodysuit. Named after a British colloquialism for condom, her breasts were clearly visible behind the powdery latex membrane. I try not to look too intently at those printed on her sweater. But it's striking how, even in the hyper-sexualized cultural landscape of today, Westwood's explorations of the body can continue to draw attention, and even shock.

Westwood's barefaced candour is frequently shocking, too. Our conversation isn't one you generally have with a fashion designer; it's certainly not a conversation fashion designers have with themselves, even today in a landscape littered with 'legacy' labels, of brands established on the precedents and 'codes' created by their founders in the early to mid-20th century (Chanel, Dior, Schiaparelli, Balmain) or inherited more recently from founders under various circumstances (Alexander McQueen, Oscar de la Renta). Westwood's approach is closer to that of Christian Dior – greatly admired by both Westwood and Kronthaler – who unofficially anointed his design assistant Yves Saint Laurent his heir presumptive in 1957, shortly before his death. In effect, Westwood is preempting the inevitable, passing her company along to a new generation and ensuring it will be run in accordance with her wishes. It's understandable, but it makes it no less extraordinary. Other designers of similar ages – Giorgio Armani, Karl Lagerfeld – steadfastly refuse to discuss succession. When Azzedine Alaïa unexpectedly died in November, there was no plan for how his *maison* would continue.

It wasn't about death, not necessarily, she points out. Rather more about the idea that Westwood may simply decide, as she says, that: 'I don't want to do any of this anymore; I don't want to be involved in fashion at all.' But, I guess, the point is that she has made the decision about who she wants to do it, as opposed to leaving the power to make that decision to somebody else.

Vivienne Westwood: Well, there may have been something in that, but I really wanted to separate the lines so that somehow we could be... it could be… he would be on his own.

I'm sorry, it's a bit of a difficult question.

Vivienne: No, no, I'm just thinking. Was I really thinking that? I don't think I ever did think of it, but...

Westwood has always been pragmatic, practical and direct. Her frankness is often disarming. Kronthaler is softer-spoken, less at ease in the spotlight, possibly more romantic. He is dressed more quietly, in striped trousers and a Westwood sweater with an embroidered crest, his hair slightly dishevelled. In the past, Kronthaler had been perceived as a dandy – he modelled in Westwood's menswear shows in the mid-1990s, wearing a *juste-au-corps*, the wide-skirted, deep-cuffed 18th-century coat favoured in the court of Louis XV, with knee breeches. He often wore a kilt, a stylistic proposition Westwood made many times for men. It reflects a shared love of historical costume, which bonded them together during Westwood's tutelage of the fledgling fashion designer. 'When I met Vivienne,' he remembers, 'she was somebody who taught you to examine history. In those days, it was unusual, but I could relate to it.'

In the early months of his time at the company, before he and Westwood became romantically involved, Kronthaler slept in the Westwood studio.

In the early months of his time at the company, before he and Westwood became romantically involved, he would also wear Westwood's archives. Kronthaler slept in the Westwood studio, then located in Greenland Street in Camden. 'I got to know her work very quickly, because of course when you come here, you're surrounded by it,' he says, in a soft voice still heavily accented by his native Austrian German. 'I always tell this story: I used to live in Greenland Street, in the design studio. I lived there for months. I actually slept in the studio. So

once they left at seven or whenever, I was in this place on my own and there were all these clothes. In those days, even the archive was there. It was just in some cardboard boxes, falling to pieces, and things would stick out. And I'd pull something out. God knows what came out… I used to dress up in it and go up the street, to a gay bar.' Kronthaler pauses. 'So I suppose I studied all this stuff, I put it on dummies and looked at it. I got to know her work, very, very quickly, because I was in the midst of it. You suck it up, like a sponge.'

The Autumn/Winter 2018 Andreas Kronthaler collection was a homage to that time, that experience, that work – and to Westwood herself. It was titled *Vivienne*, and after collections exploring his own childhood, this was inspired by Vivienne's heritage, and their relationship, 'as my collaborator, my friend and partner, my teacher and of course, as my muse', to borrow from Kronthaler's handwritten collection notes. Prior to the show's presentation, Westwood herself pawed through the rails of garments. She asserted she hadn't seen the collection before that day. A model was wearing a georgette dress, gathered at the shoulder, with platform shoes. They were crosshatched with a photographic print of hair, a Surrealist-inspired idea originally used to decorate the interior of the Vivienne Westwood store on Mayfair's Davies Street.

'Do you know that dress?' Westwood says, softly – the opener to a statement, rather than a question, her eyes trained on the ankle-length, hair-printed gown. 'When I first met Andreas, he was a student and it was he who introduced the idea of that dress, as a student. It was a long time ago. And it's a circle, it's a big circle.' She means the pattern of the dress itself – referred to as the 'Circle' dress in Westwood's sphere, cut around the body to give an undulating hem and a soft fall to the fabric. 'It's only belted,' says Westwood, of the shape created by drawing the dress in at the shoulders. 'Andreas demonstrated that by getting a girl to climb up a ladder and then put these belts on to show.' The ladder was emblematic, she later states, of Andreas's showmanship, even then as a student. 'I'd never seen anything like it, the way he showed his clothes,' Westwood recalls. But more than the presentation, Westwood was intrigued by the garment itself. 'I had never noticed it before – in 1500, 1400, the influence of Greek costume on the medieval idea of this shape… It's like a Greek statue. It was all pulled through, like *that*.' Westwood sometimes speaks and assumes you understand her references. That 'that' wasn't referring to the dress in front of us, in Paris, but the chitons of the Ancient Greeks, belted, with the cloth manipulated to create different effects. Westwood is familiar with their styles through Ancient Greek statuary – her studies of these, and her love of the period and the philosophical ideals tied up in the drapery of ancient dress, led her to create a series of collections around them in the late 1980s – when she designed nude tights with mirrored fig-leaves, and corsets swung with 'Grecian' drapery. She's been referencing Ancient Greeks in her clothing ever since, including this dress. 'You *see* it,' she earnestly emphasises. Westwood's original training – as a teacher – comes through often when she talks, hammering an idea home, encouraging everyone to look. The 'Circle' dress, she asserts, is a reflection of the styles seen in Jan Van Eyck's *Arnolfini Portrait*, painted in 1434.

This dress also marked the first major collaboration between Westwood and Kronthaler, presented in the Spring/Summer 1992 *Cut and Slash* menswear collection in Florence and worn by its only female model, Susie Bick.[2] Other outfits referenced in Autumn/Winter 2018 were the short, bubbly skirts of Westwood's *Mini Crini* collection of 1985, and her *Harris Tweed* collection of 1987. ('I always use Harris Tweed. She has used it since 1985,' explains Kronthaler.) The latest collection is divided, he says, into five categories, each representing a different decade of work: 'The 1970s, the 1980s, the 1990s, the 2000 generation or whatever you call it. I can't remember what it was called.' There is an entire subsection physically labelled 'Punk', featuring hand-knitted, matted mohair with holes poked through. A second model tried these on, an oversized, distorted mohair sweater over a drawstring skirt. Westwood herself played with the drawstring, tugging at the skirt and the flaps of fabric layered over the buttocks uneasily. She then took the outfit to Kronthaler, questioning it. He listened intently, then pulled simply at the drawstring, allowing the skirt to drop to the floor. The model stepped out. Problem solved. Later, when I mentioned this to Westwood, she frowned and said: 'I don't even do anything. I don't get involved in putting it together. I don't remember putting it together at all.'

'When Andreas arrived, he really did start telling everybody what to do. He made me lengthen the skirts, and I was not very happy about that...'

Although Westwood has now passed control of this line to Kronthaler, I wonder about how the collaboration worked before this period, between these two larger-than-life personalities. Although softly spoken, Kronthaler has always been a forceful presence in the Westwood studios. 'There was a collection to be done,' Kronthaler now says, pragmatically, of his beginnings at the company in 1989. 'And there were decisions to be made and I started... Not maybe that many business decisions at the beginning. I wasn't actually involved in that, but other decisions I was very much aware and I helped in making those decisions.' He shrugs. 'This way of seeing things had a certain force.'

In 1990, Azzedine Alaïa invited them to stage the Autumn/Winter 1991 collection, *Dressing Up*, at his showrooms. 'People were questioning that and I said, "Of course we have to go. Of course we'll go to Paris and show in Paris",' he says. 'To me it was, "Yes, of course, we'll do it. Let's not think about it. I know we have no money, but we'll carry it there or we'll make it ourselves there". I don't know, I had this attitude.'

It's interesting, because that became what people did. Designers would start in London and then they would go and show in Paris. It became the rule.

Andreas Kronthaler: For me, Paris was Paris, and the window of the world, and probably still is. It's the famous window. I thought it was very important and necessary to show there. Worth showing there. Like I said, we had this opportunity with Azzedine. We were invited maybe two or three times, I can't remember. That was a big cost at that time because there was no money. We didn't have any money. Azzedine helped tremendously. He enjoyed it. That's how I got to know Paris actually, through Azzedine Alaïa and his world, his environment. It was like a family; you share things. One week we came over from London and showed the collection there, and it was great. Azzedine's dogs… It was a crazy show, I remember. People were… You can see on the videos. They were shocked! But it wasn't so shocking I thought.

I think people here in London were quite complacent about Vivienne, the box she fitted into. People didn't perceive the work in that kind of way.

Andreas: They appreciated it much more there; they could see what it is. At that point, it was a lot about humour and that kind of exaggeration, the story behind everything. It was extremely flamboyant I suppose.

Did it fit with your sensibility? The couture element.

Andreas: Yes. I tried to bring that in right from the beginning. I suppose I just liked all these evening dresses and big gowns because Vivienne would never do these, or she had never done them before. 'Why do you do this? Nobody needs it!' So I said: 'I don't care. It's just to make somebody look great.'

Which is a very French point of view as well.

Andreas: Or European. I always very much like things that have no usage any more. One of my favourite pieces of clothing would be an opera coat. I just *love* the thought of having a coat that is probably worth so much and so many hours and so much work, and you only wear it for two minutes. From the car to the opera, and then take it off. It's just something I think is unbelievable.

'When Andreas came, he really did start telling everybody what to do,' Westwood told me in London, without Kronthaler. 'He did it because he was so passionate about everything, and so he was saying things, that it has to be like this. He made me lengthen the skirts, and I was not very happy about that… and everybody is saying, "Who the *hell* is this guy?" But then they liked what he was doing. He was an amazing one-off.'

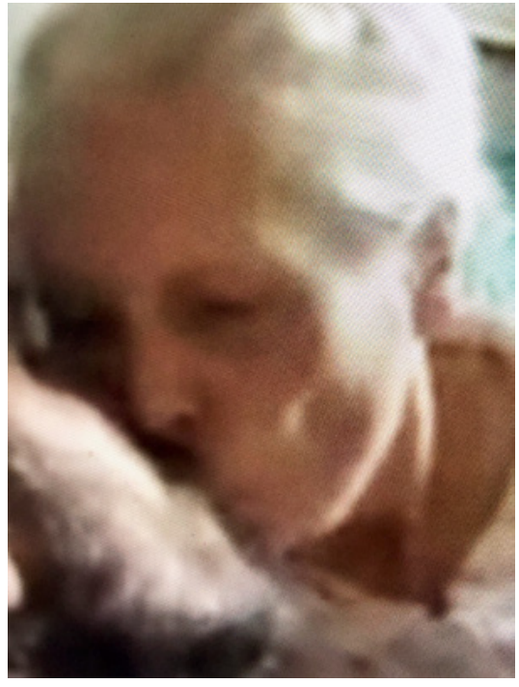
'Minnie, who did our jewellery, said, 'Oh, Vivienne and Andreas are in love'. I'd never considered it before, and I thought, 'People are noticing this thing.'"

Westwood shares similar traits of single-mindedness and a certain didactic strain. The teacher in her can come out not only in conversation, but also sometimes, in her collections. Westwood seeks, constantly, to impart knowledge, to tell you something. When you speak with her, you ask few questions, receive long answers. This is not a criticism, just an observation.

Do you like someone who challenges you? Because it sounds like Andreas challenged you a lot.

Vivienne: I don't think he does challenge me. When we were working on the Gold Label, we worked kind of separately. There was no point in me trying to get on with things, even to start making some preliminary little diagrams, because everything had to be done his way. So you always had to wait for him.

I work in the air. I imagine it and write things down. Before I met Andreas, I used to work in bed, designing clothes with little bits of cloth and pins, pinning them all together. I didn't



go to work. I worked it all out in the air. And that doesn't mean to say it's going to be what you want. You then actually have to work on it, of course. But Andreas has to have everything around him before he works, so he's under pressure quite a lot, more than I was, because I start earlier on, doing a collection. So he has to have all this, this inspiration, just collect things, and he has to have the fabrics. And it's just so important for him. Of course, he works without them, but he sometimes refuses until the fabrics arrives. He wants the fabric there to work with.

Anyway, we worked separately in the end, and I got on with the knitwear usually. That's one thing I could do and just do it without him. I used to do that when we did the Gold Label. And start a few ideas going, of course. I used my cutting principles sometimes and then I could give it to him and put them together with him when we were ready. Because to work together was nearly, really, impossible.

Did he ever challenge me? Not really. In fact, the opposite. He needed me because when you work, you need somebody to bounce off, and it was my opinion he needed all the time. So no, I don't think he does ever challenge me, really. He always promotes me and he's really, really impressed by the clothes I did before I knew him. He just thinks they're incredible. He tapped into that. Andreas was too big; he needed an anchor and working with me gave it to him. And then, as I said, he immediately started to dictate everything – but with very good reason.

'Of course I can respect people who are just *nice* and don't think, and that's who they are. But it's better to be with somebody who stimulates my brain.'

Westwood and Kronthaler's upbringings had certain similarities. Westwood was born Vivienne Isabel Swire and was raised and lived in Glossop in the Derbyshire countryside until she was 17; Kronthaler's upbringing in the Tyrol was similarly rural and idyllic. Westwood made her own clothes – she could, she says, create a physically, and frugally, tight pencil skirt from a yard of fabric with a skinny seam down the back – while Kronthaler's mother had her wardrobe made by a local seamstress. 'Clothes were important to the way I grew up,' Kronthaler says. 'My mother always went to the tailor every Saturday. She had 50 percent, 60 percent of her clothes made; it was quite intense. She used to do that in the 1960s, 1970s, anyway, from when I was a little boy. I would always go with her to this tailor or I would go and get lengths of fabrics. It was a complete thing; it's like you go and buy bread, you went and bought a length of fabric for a jacket or a skirt or whatever. She always used to have a little piece of knitwear or a piece of wool in her bag, that she matched something to. So I think it is very ingrained, or engraved, in me. How clothes are part of life.'

'I come from the north of England,' Westwood says. 'I got started a bit later than Andreas because until I was 17 and came to London, I didn't even know there were art galleries or anything. I was born in the countryside with a lot of freedom to roam, no cars around. Very, very safe. And parents who just let you do what you wanted. Andreas was the same in the Tyrol, because it was the mountains and everybody knew each other. But they were near to Italy and his family were far more cosmopolitan in their culture than mine.'

Your relationship with Andreas started off as professional. First you taught him in Vienna, then he came and worked with you here. When or how did it become romantic?

Vivienne: Well, it did take some time. It's very easy to explain. We were very attracted to each other, and I had to be careful when I was teaching him not to let the others know, because they were fantastic, the people in that school, half of them anyway. But I kept it to myself. I didn't let him know that. But we were always looking for each other, we really were. And very soon after I started going there, he used to come and meet me from the airport. And we used to end up going to eat something together and just walking around the central square. I was with him quite a bit. And when he came to work here, he used to sleep up in Camden where our studio was. He's told you that. He loved to look at the clothes at night. Then at one point, I let him come and sleep in my house. I had a spare room. I remember a girl called Minnie, who used to do our jewellery, saying, 'Oh, they're in love' – meaning me and Andreas. And I'd never considered it before and I thought, 'People have noticed this thing?' And I was not letting anybody know it. And least of all Andreas – I was trying not to let on that somehow, we were really keen on each other all the time. And it's the same now. Anyway, we were very close to each other. And then the point came when he was doing so much work with us, and Austria wasn't in the EU, and we had this problem at the border and we just decided to get married. I didn't tell anybody and Andreas didn't tell anybody. And Ben, my son, and his girlfriend were the only ones who knew.

My mother didn't even know. The funny thing is that once I got married to Andreas, it made me completely committed to him. When I was married once before, when I was young to a very lovely man, ever so nice, I didn't feel so committed then. I was young or whatever; I don't know what it was. But when I said those words, 'Till death us do part', I didn't necessarily mean it at the time, but that's what it's been like. You know, whatever happens, I would put him first before anything. And he knows that, you see, as well. He trusts me completely. I think being older has something to do with not being jealous of him. With my first husband, I was jealous or cross if he didn't come home on time. So I was like that when I was younger, even though I didn't have cause. So it hasn't been that I didn't have cause or anything; it's just been that I really haven't been that jealous. My mother and father, they were made for each other. They put their children first, but nevertheless, they just were amazing together. In those days this idea of romantic love, it really was that somehow you married the one, and you stay with them forever. And that's it, that's the glory of your life, that you stay with them. And I think I did have that attitude, but I don't have it with Andreas because I lived on my own without any sexual relationship for nearly 10 years and I was so happy. It was no problem to me at all. I was not looking for a man when I met him, at all. I now know that you can't find everything in one person anyway. If I'd known that then, I would have had a different attitude. I probably would not have fallen out of love with my first husband if I'd have realized that you don't get everything from one person.

Partnership is important to Westwood. Not necessarily personal, but certainly professional, although both have wound up knotted together throughout her work, which has been dominated by collaborations with assertive males. Interestingly, as a teenager she loved to dance – where men lead – and in her professional life, Westwood has waltzed with a number of different partners. Her manager, Carlo d'Amario, has worked with her since the 1980s: they had a brief love affair early in their work together, but it only lasted a few months; and although her 'intellectual personal trainer' Gary Ness, who died in 2008, had a marked impact on her work and beliefs, he was homosexual. The relationship with Kronthaler is the longest sustained with a single man satisfying both demands, and for Westwood is the most rewarding on all fronts. She met Malcolm McLaren in 1965 and, six years later, opened a shop on the King's Road with the name Let It Rock, creating clothes inspired by the revival of 1950s Teddy boy styles. McLaren was often seen as the 'tapped-in' one, connected with youth culture, specifically music, a dynamic oddly mirrored in Westwood's relationship with Kronthaler. Westwood refuses to read newspapers, but Kronthaler reads a number of them every day. 'I do rely on people sometimes giving me stuff that's important for me to know,' says Westwood. She worked alongside McLaren for 12 years, although their personal relationship eroded sooner, and the final years saw a lessening of his creative impact: 'Malcolm became less and less involved. The last time I gave him credit he had simply added one hat, and that's all he did.' Discussion of McLaren with Westwood has felt verboten for some years; today, however, Westwood seems, if anything, detached, slightly disinterested. 'When I worked with Malcolm, he was not technical. He could not make things. He might have been able to, but he'd never tried. So it was always just cherry-on-the-cake ideas, really. I was doing all the construction and building the things.'

'I want Andreas Kronthaler to be acknowledged by everybody for the genius that he is. And I want his name to be as well-known as mine.'

So it's a very different relationship with Andreas?

Vivienne: I don't know. Only that my relationships were always about brain stimulation. Let's not talk about Malcolm, because I would have to end that by saying I lost interest in him because he didn't use his brain in the end. He just wanted success and he didn't care about what things were really like; he'd read a book and didn't care what it said. He'd just make it up. Whatever, I don't know. I lost interest in his intellect.

And Andreas is stimulating in terms of that intellect, in terms of that rapport?

Vivienne: I'm just saying that I've always made my choices because I'm interested in what people think. I mean, of course I can respect people who are just *nice* and don't think, and that's who they are. But it's much better, I think, to be with somebody who's stimulating my brain.

I always get the impression Westwood is simultaneously weary and wary of interviews. She's constantly and consistently misinterpreted, and her intellect undermined. She's made out to be difficult, irascible. She is none of these things. Her environmental activism is her current fixation and has been for a number of years. 'My main concern all the time is my

activism,' she states. 'But it's not about that we're talking, is it?' Westwood is aware of the impression she gives, contrary to popular belief, and the contrariness she is often perceived to embody.

It is interesting though that, often, the issues and ideas Westwood champions are initially dismissed before finding wider acceptance. It frequently happened in the case of her fashion; her corset and crinolines, her platform shoes and rich, baroque-derived patterns set the pace for fashion at the start of the 1990s. Some criticized Westwood when she began to create clothes in the vein of mid-century couture, saying she was pandering to the establishment or creating vainglorious reflections of fashion history without contemporary relevance. Some have also criticized Kronthaler, in hindsight, citing his influence over Westwood's aesthetic. Yet, she soldiered on, and the revival of true haute couture, and its reflected styles in ready-to-wear, became one of the major stories of late 1990s fashion. And no reminder is needed of fashion's aggressive rejection of punk during its heyday, and its embrace of the style immediately after its demise. Westwood was first.

In recent years, she has become equally well-known for her polemics. From the mid-1980s, she espoused the death of culture in the 20th century: 'Everyone knows we live in an ecological crisis, but they don't realize the cultural one is just as critical,' she told the *New York Times* in 1993. Her collections, with their homages to Greek and Roman styles, the *salonnières* of 18th-century Paris[3] and café society of the 19th,[4] were palimpsests on which Westwood could scribble her thoughts on how we should think, not just dress. Her Autumn/Winter 1994 collection, *On Liberty*, was named after the John Stuart Mill[5] essay and was conceived as a critique of the 'tyranny of the majority', succour to Westwood's anti-orthodoxy ethos. Democracy, Westwood reasoned, made the masses fat, so the slender silhouette came into fashion. Westwood, instead, dressed her models up with extreme padding and bustle-pillows, with projecting cages of wire over the rear (and later, the 'tits', as she gleefully tells me), crafting a bombastic female form as an antidote to philosophical orthodoxy, not just to looking like anyone else. A decade later, her opinions had flipped 180-degrees (which isn't unique, for Westwood). She became fixated with the horror of impending ecological disaster, devoting her collections to combating climate change. Observers sneered at both standpoints. But today, the contemporary obsessions of reality television and social media are regularly decried as 'culturally redundant', among other societal extremes, while climate change is real. And everyone now, it seems, is an activist. Westwood increasingly seems less and less out of place.

Even Westwood's latest refrain, a sensible notion of 'buy less, choose well, make it last' – 'the best thing I've ever written, really,' Westwood comments – has raised the hackles of those who see it as inherently incompatible with the very identity of the industry she operates within. Which is, perhaps, the problem many have with Westwood's trussing together of her medium with a message: fashion isn't supposed to say anything. Fashion isn't supposed to provoke thought. Fashion is supposed to be attractive, to perhaps communicate wealth or status or sexuality. You're supposed to look at fashion, not think about it. To borrow the title of one of Westwood and Kronthaler's mid-1990s collections, change and upheaval in fashion are supposed to be a storm in a teacup, nothing more. But Westwood's fashion forces you to *think*, which is why so many people react so violently to it. It has been the subject of reams of newspaper headlines and at least one court case: the Naked Cowboys T-shirt, with its Tom of Finland-style[6] illustration of two cowboys, naked from the waist down with their penises almost touching, incited the ire of the authorities in a way the later (photographic) 'tits' T-shirt did not. Westwood and McLaren were fined £50 for 'exposing to public view an indecent exhibition' in November 1975. It is near-impossible to imagine a T-shirt evoking similar reactions today; in no small part, thanks to what Westwood did and does.

Westwood is pre-empting the inevitable, passing her company along to a new generation, ensuring it will be run in accordance with her wishes.

Vivienne Westwood is simultaneously one of the best-known and one of the most overlooked fashion designers in history. Her face and name garner recognition from a public to whom 'fashion' – as a rarefied, storied realm distinct from clothing – means very little; she was awarded an OBE in 1992 and made a Dame for her services to fashion in 2006. And yet what Westwood did, and continues to do, has never been *fully* appreciated for its power, for the way it has shifted the way we dress, but also the way we think.

In their small studio, in Battersea, Vivienne Westwood and Andreas Kronthaler drink tea and talk about changing the world. And then they do it.

1. According to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: 'Bertrand Arthur William Russell (1872-1970) was a British philosopher, logician, essayist and social critic best known for his work in mathematical logic and analytic philosophy. His most influential contributions include his championing of logicism (the view that mathematics is in some important sense reducible to logic), his refining of Gottlob Frege's predicate calculus (which still forms the basis of most contemporary systems of logic), his defense of neutral monism (the view that the world consists of just one type of substance which is neither exclusively mental nor exclusively physical), and his theories of definite descriptions, logical atomism and logical types.' He was a fervent life-long pacifist and founding president of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, as well as an atheist and 'advocate of free love and open marriages'. Despite his groundbreaking work in analytic philosophy, he always considered himself an author rather than a philosopher, and in 1950, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

2. Discovered aged 14 by Steven Meisel, Susie Bick was modelling full-time by the age of 16, becoming one of the top models of the late 1980s. She became a muse for Nick Knight, Helmut Newton and Guy Bourdin, among others, and the face of Dior cosmetics. She now runs her own womenswear label, The Vampire's Wife, whose name was taken from an unpublished novel by her husband, Nick Cave. The couple married in 1999.

3. *Salonnières* were woman who acted as hosts and vital patrons to writers, artists and philosophers in 17th- and 18th-century France. At their salons, they would host and moderate discussions about philosophy and ideas. Celebrated *salonnières* include Catherine, Marquise de Rambouillet; Anne, Marquise de Lambert; and later, Madame de Staël.

4. 'Café society' is a catch-all term for the culture of intellectual and artistic movements and carefree experimentation that took place in cities across Europe and in New York; it roughly coincides with the Belle Époque in France, which ran from 1871 until the outbreak of the First World War in 1914.

5. A philosophical naturalist, utilitarian and liberal, John Stuart Mill (1803-1873) was the most influential anglophone philosopher of the 19th century. One of his most celebrated works, *On Liberty*, was an attempt to apply his utilitarianism to 19th century society and an investigation into the 'struggle between authority and liberty'. He argued that, as the empowered masses could be as tyrannical as any absolute monarch, individual freedom should never be repressed.

6. Tom of Finland was the pseudonym of Touko Valio Laaksonen (1920-1991), a Finnish illustrator and artist, best known for his homoerotic, fetishistic art. Featuring male figures with exaggerated attributes and wearing tight leather clothing, his work is acknowleged as having been highly influential in the visual definition of male homosexual culture in the 20th century.

Photographies retouchées

BALENCIAGA

‘Fantasy, abandoned.’

Photographs by Jamie Hawkesworth
Styling by Max Pearmain

Previous page: Trousers, knit and shirt by Alberta Ferretti
Boots by Dorateymur

Coat by Salvatore Ferragamo. Skirts from stylist's archive
Tights from the National Theatre. Boots by Dorateymur
Bag by Prada. Brooch by Gillian Horsup

Top, jacket and brooch by Versace
Skirt and cycling shorts from stylist's archive
Tights from the National Theatre
Hat by Alberta Ferretti

Dress by Versace
Skirts and Versace vest from stylist's archive
Tights from the National Theatre
Boots by Dorateymur

Dress by Prada
Catsuit from stylist's archive
Angel wings and hat from the National Theatre
Boots by Dorateymur

Jacket and trousers by Krizia
T-shirt by D&G from stylist's archive
Boots by Dorateymur

Jeans, hat and Versace vest from stylist's archive
Skirt by Max Mara
Boots by Dorateymur
Bag, hoop and brooch by Versace

Dress by Gucci
Earring model's own

Photographer's assistants: Cecilia Byrne and Andrew Moores. Stylist's assistants: Laura Vartiainen and Hugo Lavin. Make-up: Lisa Butler at Bryant Artists. Make-up assistant: Nina Sagri.
Hair stylist: Anthony Turner at Streeters. Hair assistant: Claire Grech. Models: Jean Campbell and Nora Attal at DNA. Set designer: Andy Hillman at Streeters. Set assistants: Richard Wardale and Craig Gleeson.
Production: Sylvia Farago and Freddie De Santiago. Production assistants: Raphy Bliss, Oliver Lee Shipton and Jamie Paley.

Jacket, shirt and trousers by Giorgio Armani
Hat from the National Theatre
Brooch by Gillian Horsup
Boots by Dorateymur

‘Hers is a countercultural pursuit.’

Long before the fashion industry co-opted art, there was Agnès B.

By Loïc Prigent
Portraits by Dominique Issermann

Why Agnès B.? Why now? Simple: she's a pioneer.

Because if fashion and art, the cultural and the commercial, today seem like such a natural fit, then that is partly thanks to Agnès B.'s vision of how a fashion label should be a central part of a larger cultural matrix; that it is a brand's duty to use its position to have a wider cultural impact. It is a belief she made real by doing what she does best: following her instincts. So, not for her a multi-million-dollar art foundation or the odd high-profile sponsorship of a blockbuster exhibition. Instead, for over 40 years, she has given continuing (often under-the-radar) support for (often avant-garde) artists whether up-and-coming early masters or once-nearly-forgotten living ones.

Between the art galleries, film-production company, environmental research ship, foundation to coordinate her cultural initiatives, and an ever-increasing art collection, the world of (lower-case) agnès b – the brand – is as far reaching as it is lovingly curated. And she has created it without ever being in hock to the banks or having spent a single *centime* on advertising. For Agnès B., it's about *doing*, not showing (off).

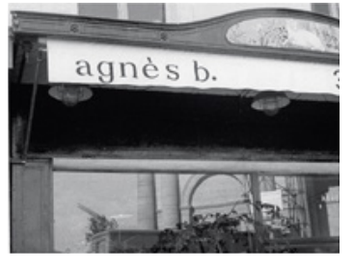
So with the symbiosis between fashion and culture now reaching global ubiquity, it seemed the right moment to reassess Agnès B.'s career and lasting influence. With this in mind, *System* asked French writer and filmmaker Loïc Prigent to spend an afternoon with the designer at her Parisian apartment near the Louvre. Their free-flowing conversation reveals a designer at odds with fashion's current imperatives, uncomfortable in the industry, and one, who by being true to her ideas, has created her own community: a professional and social family of artists, filmmakers and kindred spirits.

We then invited three of those people – Jonas Mekas, Ryan McGinley and Harmony Korine – to share their own thoughts on Agnès B., the woman who has in turns been their collaborator, muse, producer, financial backer, facilitator, co-conspirator, and trusted friend.

Photograph by Philippe Leroy

Agnès B in Brittany during the 1960s.

1.



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ON L'APPELLE
« AGNEAU »
Agnès Bourgois mais tous ses amis conquis par son incroyable douceur, sa sensibilité rêveuse la surnomment « Agneau ». Deux séjours, l'un dans un magazine féminin, l'autre comme styliste chez Dorothée Bis lui ont appris à connaître parfaitement les « 20 Ans » et leurs problèmes- vêtements. Depuis, elle a eu l'idée de créer des modèles et des accessoires aussi irrésistibles que pratiques. Sa première collection se place sous les signes heureux du printemps et de l'été : petites robes de laine chinée-tendre, jupes, pulls comme on en rêvait, maillots de coton écru, sacs, ceintures, souliers comme on n'en rêvait plus. D'ailleurs, découvrez vite dans nos pages de mode de ce mois les modèles signés Agnès, vous allez être comme nous émerveillées ! Oui, vraiment ils conviennent totalement à notre coquetterie quotidienne et... à notre porte-monnaie ! Pour le moment Agnès-Agneau travaille pour les grands confectionneurs. Lorsqu'on lui demande si un jour elle fondera sa propre maison de prêt-à-porter elle secoue négativement sa « tête blonde » : « Non, c'est trop compliqué, je ne veux pas d'ennuis, je n'ai pas assez le sens des affaires, je suis très bien comme ça ! » Son sourire tranquille sous-entend qu'elle est timide, peu bavarde, qu'il faut la laisser à ses croquis, à ses rêves.
une nouvelle styliste-modéliste des plus mignonnes, des plus douées nt de naître à Paris. Elle s'appelle

4.

1. Still from *Qui êtes-vous, Polly Maggoo?* (1966), directed by William Klein, costumes by Agnès B.
2. The lamb on the Rue du Jour storefront, painted by Jean-Michel Prudhomme, Paris (1976).
3. First label for the US (date unknown). Photograph by Agnès B.
4. One of the first articles about Agnès, in the magazine *Dépêche Mode*, cut out and stuck in an album by her sisters (date unknown). From the Archives agnès b.

Polly Maggoo: William Klein/Trunk Archive

Loïc Prigent: Is your phone often in flight mode?
Agnès B: Well, I put it on at night, of course. I don't like being woken up at night and I've got too many friends who might call me at whatever time.
Loïc: So what did you do today?
Agnès: I had lots of people over at mine last night until very late, so I had to get my head straight this morning… I had quite a few things to think through and organize.
Loïc: What time do you generally wake up?
Agnès: I'm not a morning person at all. I don't like going to bed; I have to force myself to go to bed, but then I still need eight hours sleep.
Loïc: When you sleep late, it interferes with the start of the day. What time will you go to Rue Dieu[1] today?

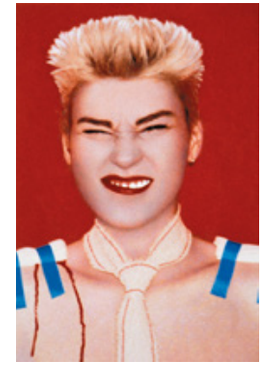
'I am very distanced from it all; I don't often read fashion magazines; I never go out shopping. I only ever wear the clothes that I've made.'

Agnès: I'll go in later, but it doesn't matter because we've done the collection, and they're doing the buying, so it's less…
Loïc: …interesting for you.
Agnès: No, it's not less interesting, it's just less my job than doing the actual collection.
Loïc: Exactly, it's less creative.
Agnès: It still interests me because the problem is, and it's the same in all houses, I've always known it, that the sales department always has trouble accepting new ideas and new things. They're always looking back at what sold well last year.
Loïc: I saw you at the Macron's fashion dinner at the Élysée.[2] You said hello to Jean Touitou of APC; that was funny.
Agnès: It was the first time I'd seen him in 30 years.
Loïc: I love how you leapt on him.
Agnès: I felt totally out of place there. It really wasn't enjoyable; I didn't think it was cool at all.
Loïc: Why? I thought it was rather nice.
Agnès: No one came to say hello; it's crazy!
Loïc: They didn't come over to say hello to you?
Agnès: It simply isn't a world that I know. There was Alber Elbaz who came to say hi to me; I think he was the only one though. I was on Jérôme Dreyfuss's table;[3] he's very nice. We didn't know the others though. I think we're all in a bubble. It depends, maybe it's different with the younger ones.
Loïc: Inès de la Fressange said the same thing about the fashion dinner in 1984, that there was tension between the designers, but there isn't any more.
Agnès: You know, I am very distanced from it all; I don't often read fashion magazines; I never go out shopping. I don't know about that, I really don't. I only ever wear what I've made. And in fact, I like to protect myself, to not really know what everyone else is doing. I think it's the street that creates trends anyway. I never work with any documentation, for example. It's all instinctive.
Loïc: No moodboard?
Agnès: Not one. Sometimes I put my own photos onto clothes or an engraving from my grandmother's house or a sculpture. We weave them together; we do lots of things. I've been doing photo dresses for a long time now. And it's funny because they've never appeared in a magazine.
Loïc: Does that frustrate you?
Agnès: If you don't pay for advertising, there's no point; the press don't even bother turning up to the show anymore.
Loïc: So it's officially a give-give situation.
Agnès: You know it is. Are we even allowed to talk about that?
Loïc: Sure we can talk about it.
Agnès: It's impossible for young designers or someone like me who was carried along by the press because they always knew how to see the new in what I was doing. I started my career at *Elle* with Hélène Lazareff.[4] With her, there was never question of taking freebies or making any compromises.
Loïc: No freebies at all?
Agnès: Hélène Lazareff was very, very straight. There were no freebies and above all, you had to be absolutely objective so you could see what was new. Now it's all happening on the Internet anyway, but the odd press cutting every now and then would be nice all the same.
Loïc: I still have the impression you're always on, or at least keeping an eye on, the Place de la République.
Agnès: I am, among other places. I love the street. I love people and simple things that aren't a pain to put on… like the costumes I did for William Klein's film, *Polly Maggoo*.[5]
Loïc: Was that you who did the famous stripes in the model's backstage sequence?
Agnès: Yes! I was only 22, 23 years old, working at Dorothée Bis.[6] You can see the outfits in my book. With lots of photos of clothes that I took myself.
Loïc: Do you take your own photos because you don't like delegating?

Agnès: No, it's just that I love taking photos; it's such a complete job. Like choosing the person to wear the clothes; I love models who are also friends or who have other jobs altogether. I love amateurism, because it means you love it. Maybe I get too personal, but people expect me to be personal. When they see me picking up the camera to take photos, everyone is happy, because that means it's going to be simple, quick and easy.
Loïc: I was very surprised at your last runway show, the last one, in March.[7] You took the microphone during the show.
Agnès: I announced the collaboration with Nekfeu,[8] when I was supposed to introduce Laure-Hélène Vaudier,[9] who works for us. Every season I invite a new designer to show, to give them a bit of exposure. We manufacture the clothes for them and then they go into the shops. It's about helping to launch them and getting their names out there.
Loïc: How does that work? Do you sign off what she does?
Agnès: I said to her, do what you want, be yourself, I have faith in you, take the fabrics you want, work in the atelier, make your pictures. I don't want to see anything until the day of the show. It's better that way.
Loïc: Seriously? Why is that better?
Agnès: Because then they are responsible for their own thing and will take it all the way. I want to let them create.
Loïc: So she had 100-percent freedom and how much time to do the collection?
Agnès: At least two months.
Loïc: What motivates you to do that? Is it about passing things on?
Agnès: It's such a pleasure to give them a chance to show their work. I don't have a studio, I don't have people working with me or people who design for me, and I just can't put my name on a garment that I haven't personally designed.
Loïc: What? *Really*?
Agnès: I've never done it, that's just how it is.
Loïc: But *everyone* does that today, there are like a hundred thousand people working in all the studios…
Agnès: Not me.
Loïc: And as they've increased the collections, they have increased the staff.
Agnès: No, not us, we don't work like that. I simply cannot put my name on something if I didn't do it. Perhaps that's something from my childhood, the ethics of Versailles. My education was very much about respect for others, so I will not put my name onto something designed by someone else.
Loïc: So for the last 42 years there hasn't been a single thing released that you didn't design?
Agnès: No, apart from the artists' T-shirts.[10]
Loïc: Not a season when you were ill or became enamoured with someone in the studio and let them do it?
Agnès: I don't have a studio, I told you that. There's the girl who takes care of fabrics, and the one who deals with buttons and zips, a girl in charge of jersey, and another in charge of knits, but I do everything myself.
Loïc: I'm feeling guilty now about keeping you all afternoon!
Agnès: Now it's fine; the collection is done. I'll be getting on with the men's summer line soon; I've already started putting things aside for that. A collection is six months of work and every three months I have a collection, so I'm always at it.
Loïc: Like an industrious ant.
Agnès: In fact, I am always doing two collections at once.
Loïc: And you've never had any trouble staying motivated? Finding the energy I hear so many of your colleagues moaning about.
Agnès: Of course it's tiring. I would like to find someone to replace me afterwards.
Loïc: Like Ann Demeulemeester did?
Agnès: Like I-don't-know-who. I don't know Ann Demeulemeester; I don't know what she does. I've never even seen one of her collections. Well, I may have seen pictures, but I don't know her.
Loïc: You're really that out of the loop?
Agnès: Believe me, I don't know *anyone* in fashion!
Loïc: You're so completely not part of the fashion scene…
Agnès: Completely! I'm much more involved with the art world. I'm the president of the hip-hop centre in Les Halles;[11] I am passionate about that. I'm the president of the Friends of the Beaux-Arts.[12] All very different sorts of self-expression. I'm so much more involved in all that, and I've had my gallery since 1984. I have lots of artist friends in different places from Japan to New York and LA, and spend much more time with them than any fashion people. I just don't know them at all, apart from Castelbajac[13] because we started at the same time and he's someone I really like. I was very fond of Azzedine, too, but I wouldn't go to

'We had to quickly find a name, so I said, 'Oh, you may as well just use Agnès B.', like in a crime story where they don't put the full name.'

5.



6.

© Brigitte Lacombe; Courtesy Galerie Daniel Templon, collection agnès b.

5. Agnès (far left) with family and friends in front of the Rue du Jour store in 1976. Photograph by Brigitte Lacombe
6. French model, muse and sometime collaborator Edwige, photographed by Pierre et Gilles (1977).

7.

8.

7. 116 Prince Street in SoHo, the first US store (date unknown). Photograph by Agnès B.
8. Photographers Bruce Weber (with agnès b. bags) and Bill Cunningham chat in New York (c.1984). Clipping from a newspaper

his dinners. We'd kiss when we saw each other, because I'd known him for so long.

Loïc: The two outsiders.

Agnès: You know, I didn't even recognize Isabel Marant when I saw her at the Elysée dinner. I thought she was Mme. Macron's assistant!

Loïc: Did you get a chance to talk to Mme. Macron?

Agnès: I wanted to talk to her about a law that doesn't work. At the moment we're not allowed to work at nights even though that's what you do at collection time. We used to have dinner and then continue working afterwards. Now we get inspected at peak times, when we have the most work. It's like Easter eggs – chocolate-makers have a lot more work at Easter! It needs to be understood that our needs change during the year, and people get paid and then given time off later.

Loïc: You like that effervescence!

Agnès: Yes, it's exciting when we're together – we listen to music and have fun, and they see me playing dolls with the models. Everything we've worked on arrives and I can put it all together, then think about what shoes, what jewellery, what hat. During those two days before the show I put together the looks, I ask their opinions, that's how I work, I need their input.

Loïc: Do they ever say no to you?

Agnès: Sometimes, they'll say, 'Not really' and so I'm like, 'OK, let's try something else'. It's a fun time, one we all love.

Loïc: And then since the '35 heures' law[14] you can't work past what time?

Agnès: They came to inspect six months ago at 8pm, and there were employees still there, and we got fined. Now we have to pay more attention and it's a lot less fun.

Loïc: Did you get your message over at the Élysée?

Agnès: No, I didn't. I've got other things I need to discuss there, too.

Loïc: Which are?

Agnès: So many things. I saw this thing earlier about restaurants in these tiny villages that no longer have the right to put signs outside the village because it supposedly looks ugly.[15] It's complete bullshit, like making retired people pay when there are so many rich people in France who don't even pay their taxes here! There really is a lot to do. But I am happy with our new president.

Loïc: I get the impression you're a lot more at ease in the company of artists, people like Ryan McGinley.

Agnès: Yes, possibly. I was at a party in New York and this stranger, who was Ryan, came up to me and just showed me these 10 photos he had in his back pocket. And then that was how I ended up showing them in Los Angeles in a boutique I had on North Robertson Boulevard. There was a wall in there to put things on and where I have always hung art as much as possible. So, I had the photos printed and *voilà*. Then he went off to some other gallery I don't know where.[16] But [art dealer and gallery owner] Yvon Lambert always says: 'You discover them and we do the work afterwards.' My artists are often shown later in more prestigious galleries – that's just how it is.

Loïc: You're the pioneer.

Agnès: Yes, but I love that.

Loïc: Isn't it frustrating though when they move on?

Agnès: I don't resent the artists for that, more the gallery owners, who sometimes don't even bother writing me a letter to tell me. I won't cite any names…

Loïc: Oh, you can if you like.

Agnès: No I won't, but it's happened so many times. The artists think they will be better taken care of, but that isn't always the case.

Loïc: I suppose prices go up when they go to bigger galleries.

Agnès: Yes, of course they do.

Loïc: Your pricing is something that's always astonished me. It just doesn't seem like you're speculating…

Agnès: No.

Loïc: The prices are comparatively low with you. For Ryan McGinley, I think it was €5,000 maximum when he was at your gallery.

Agnès: It depends; there was more expensive, but there was also cheaper.

Loïc: How do you establish the prices?

Agnès: When we have someone unknown, then we price low, and they are often unknowns to start with. Then later…

Loïc: Like when you were selling [Jacques-Henri] Lartigue recently.[17]

Agnès: I've wanted to do a Lartigue show for a long time because I think it's interesting to know what went on before, especially for young photographers today. I felt it was educational to see how at the start of the 20th century, there was someone doing photographs with these beautiful texts. I think that show was a photography lesson for younger photographers. That freedom, that poetry, that lust for life, I've always

'I was at a party in New York and this stranger, who was Ryan McGinley, came up and showed me these 10 crumpled photos he had in his back pocket.'

found it incredibly important to show all that.

Loïc: The exhibition was crazy. There were these monographs that are available in all the biggest museums and there were things that have already been on show, but there were also previously unseen images, and the prices were pretty reasonable.

Agnès: We established the prices with the Donation Jacques Henri Lartigue.[18]

Loïc: With things actually signed by him. They were new prints from the Avedon period,[19] weren't they?

Agnès: There was a selection: vintage prints, recent prints, previously unseen images that had never been printed before. They had found negatives and we worked very closely with the Donation Lartigue.

Loïc: The prices weren't speculative.

Agnès: I don't do that. I don't know what it all means. I know what I can pay for work by an unknown artist. Like when I was showing Nan Goldin in 1991. I did her first slide show,[20] we went to the cinema in Bastille and I said, 'Why don't we project your photos and you talk out loud about how you feel about each one?' We were both almost in tears, but wow, it was beautiful. It was the first time she did that. It was just so instinctive, amateur sure, but it pushed me to do other things in a different way. When I say I'm pragmatic, it's true, but then I am also very instinctive with the artists I communicate with. We have a very delicate dialogue. Very simple. For example, they always talk to me about their childhood, Basquiat included.

Loïc: Where did you meet him?

Agnès: I bought a drawing in his studio in 1983, a stunning self-portrait, which had been pinned up with two drawing pins for years.

Loïc: You bought it at his studio?

Agnès: Yes, because I had seen a canvas at the Paris Biennale in 1982 with his name, and I said to myself, I'd like to meet him. It wasn't at all expensive; I put the pins through the holes that Basquiat had already made. I didn't know anyone else in Paris who'd heard of him and since then I have bought other drawings by him, as well as *Plastic Sax*,[21] a fabulous yellow, blue and turquoise painting. I remember his last show at Yvon's; it was about six months before he died.[22] 'So that's you,' he said to me, because he'd bought himself an agnès b. by Warhol T-shirt for his birthday, which I only found out afterwards. It's funny, he loved agnès b. white shirts. 'So that's you,' he said, with all his height, his hair, his brown suit and white shirt, black tie, very chic, very beautiful, like in the photo. And I said, 'Yes, this is me'. Then I left and thought I wouldn't see him again. But in fact, he was waiting for me in the pizzeria across the road and he called out to me, 'Agnès! Agnès!' So I said to myself, 'Well, I'll go and see him' and we ended up talking for two hours instead of going to Castelbajac's dinner. The next night he called me, wanting me to join him at the Crillon. I said, 'No, sorry, I can't'. The next night the same thing, then he trashed his hotel room. Yvon recently told me that he had fallen in love with me. I'd said, 'I'll see you in New York, I'll be coming soon, maybe we'll see each other then'. I tried to say that to him because he was incredibly seductive, and we'd talked and talked. It really was marvellous; we got on so well. Similar to Harmony Korine, actually.

Loïc: A love story that never happened. Could you have fallen in love with Basquiat?

Agnès: I could have done, but I had a new lover at the time and I was too complicated. I lived here with four children. It was complicated. I wasn't just going to rock up to the Crillon at 4am. I wasn't in the mood.

Loïc: It wasn't the right love story at the right time.

Agnès: No, but I was pretty taken aback all the same.

Loïc: Do you often get artists coming up to you, like Ryan McGinley did, with 10 photos stuffed in their pockets?

Agnès: There are some who come and see me like that, yes. Like Claire Tabouret,[23] for example, I knew her at the Beaux-Arts and I loved her work. I'm never disappointed by artists – it's crazy!

Loïc: And when was the last time you went to the Louvre? You really live just around the corner from it, so do you go often?

Agnès: I went to the Louvre a lot as a child. I was in love with the *Man with a Glove* by Titian.[24] He's beautiful, isn't he? I think I was 10 years old.

Loïc: Are you satisfied with the size of agnès b. today?

Agnès: Gosh, I don't know. I could easily have stayed in the Rue du Jour doing my own dyeing and selling clothes that hadn't even dried. That's how it was at the start, people would leave with dyed petticoats that were still damp stuffed into plastic bags.

'Basquiat wanted me to join him at the Crillon [hotel] that night. I said, 'No, sorry, I can't'. I was recently told that he had fallen in love with me.'

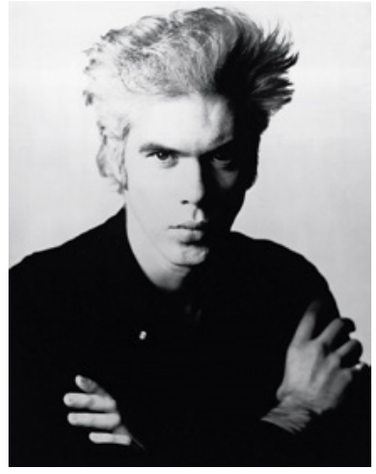
9.

10.

© Gaspar Noé; *Reservoir Dogs* © Lions Gate; © Nicolas Guerin; *Pulp Fiction* © Miramax

9. Images from Gaspar Noé's fashion fairy story for agnès b. Spring/Summer 1999.
10. Agnès dressed the characters in Quentin Tarantino's films: Steve Buscemi and Harvey Keitel in *Reservoir Dogs* and John Travolta in *Pulp Fiction*.

11.



12.

13.

11. A letter from Agnès B. to Jim Jarmusch about his clothes for Cannes (2005).
12. Photograph of Jim Jarmusch by Agnès B.
13. Artist archives at the galerie du jour, Paris (date unknown).

Loïc: It could have stayed something small. When did it start to take off?
Agnès: It was with my daughters' father, my second husband,[25] and then the Japanese man who came to see us, and the development in Japan in the early 1980s. They adored my stuff and still do – now all the Japanese kids want agnès b. caps. It's funny how things come around.
Loïc: Is there a big demand for caps?
Agnès: They're popular because of the b. from agnès b. which makes it look like being a member of a business whose ethics and vision they like. They do buy other things, though. Our original customers are in their 50s now, but agnès b. is still very trendy in Japan, so there's definitely a revival. I'm really well-known there; they all kiss me and try to grab my hair. It's crazy over there.
Agnès: No, because I'm doing things my way against all the odds and maybe I'm wrong, but I don't think so. I really need to find someone as determined as me, but it'll happen one of these days.
Loïc: Do you have a CEO today?
Agnès: Yes, me. I am designer and CEO. I am the designer at agnès b. and my son is the director, Étienne Bourgois, one of the twins I had with Christian Bourgois. We're a family *maison*; we don't have banks holding us by the purse strings.
Loïc: So you don't have vast loans?
Agnès: No, no.
Loïc: And you never do advertising campaigns?
Agnès: We have never advertised; I'm completely against advertising; I hate advertising. Advertising is stupid and makes you stupid. May 1968 affected me, but even before, I didn't like it. I was living with Philippe Michel,[26] the father of my eldest daughter; he was a big ad man, and I think what interested him was everything I said against advertising. It stimulated and attracted him. He saw how I was. I have never done any advertising.
Loïc: So the only advertising I can see are your shows themselves?
Agnès: My shows, Instagram, the Internet, but it's not very well done. I need to take care of that actually, because I don't think it looks good.
Loïc: At the shows, why do your models stop in front of the audience?
Agnès: Because we tell them to, so the audience has enough time to have a good look.
Loïc: You're the only place where that happens.
Agnès: Really?
Loïc: Yours is the only show where I have enough time to actually see the clothes. The others send out a new look every six seconds and then they walk super-fast. And there are no pauses, even at the end of the catwalk.
Agnès: More importantly – I mean, I don't know but based on the little I see, because literally I never even watch the shows on TV – but I find they're like robots; they're all the same. What I want is to show human beings, which isn't the same job at all.
Loïc: Yes, yours almost seem to saunter.
Agnès: Exactly.
Loïc: But you still respect the rules, they're just strolling nonchalantly. I've filmed you backstage and saw how hands-on you are. There isn't an army of people endlessly retouching behind you.

'We have never advertised; I'm completely against it. Advertising is stupid and makes you stupid. May 1968 affected me, but even before, I didn't like it.'

Loïc: Did the company's growth scare you?
Agnès: I can't say it was something I was looking for, but because of it, I've been able to do lots of other things and I can help lots of people. I can have my foundation and the endowment funds. I truly believe that the rich have to share their wealth, and I want to say, in a nutshell: the rich should share! What are they going to do with all their money when they're dead? So many people could live off their taxes if they paid them. But instead they die with all that money. What are they going to do with it? As my grandmother always used to say: 'Shrouds don't have pockets.' I love that expression. Anyway, I believe in art now.
Loïc: So you've never worried about losing your soul?
Agnès: Absolutely not. I see it as a game; I have fun, and I'm not at all stressed out. I wasn't stressed, did you notice that? I think there are much more serous things in life. Like when someone close to you is ill.
Loïc: Didn't you make red scarves in 1988 in the fight against AIDS?
Agnès: We still make them. We sell them to help people who have AIDS, but don't have enough for cigarettes or candy. We've been doing it forever. As soon as the AIDS epidemic started, I was in the midst of it all, with people who were ill, people who were dying. Between the drugs and AIDS, the 1980s was a slaughter in artistic circles. And straight away I said, 'OK, we're going to put jars of condoms in the shops'. It used to cost 10 francs for a condom[27] and I thought that was outrageous. I thought

that everyone would do the same, but we're still the only ones with jars of condoms.

Loïc: For free?

Agnès: Yes, I decided that. I was very close to the organization Act Up.[28] We did agnès b. with Act Up; I did T-shirts for them, too. I was lying on the ground with Pierre Bergé in front of the Louvre; we were all lying on the ground in the rue de Rivoli.[29]

Loïc: Why did Act Up mean so much to you?

Agnès: It still does; I'm very sensitive to pain.

Loïc: And prone to anger?

Agnès: Yes, I can get cross about things, like Sarajevo.[30] Nearly four years in Europe, a whole community besieged in a city in the 20th century – it just knocked me sideways. I said to myself: 'How do you cope when your child is crying and hungry, and you've got nothing to give them – no water, no heating, no food.' There was this guy who worked for me in the shop, who I really like, and we said we have to do something. So he founded Première Urgence,[31] filled up lorries in the western suburbs of Paris and drove to Sarajevo in the middle of winter.

Loïc: Have you always seen agnès b. as a sort of transmitter?

Agnès: I had a lot of support from the press because *Elle*, *Marie Claire* and *Jardin des Modes* all instantly saw what was happening and that it was quite unlike anything else at the time.

Loïc: To start with, they saw the clothes and then you became more than just clothes.

Agnès: Yes, then came the gallery; then there were the people I was dressing; then there was *Pulp Fiction* and *Reservoir Dogs*: Tarantino sent his wardrobe mistress to the shop in LA.[32]

Loïc: Did you sell a lot of suits after *Reservoir Dogs*?

Agnès: I don't know, but Harvey Keitel still has his jacket with the bullet holes in. He told me they found it in storage and he wanted me to exhibit it in Paris. I'm great friends with Harvey; I like him a lot.

Loïc: He still has his agnès b. suit with bullet holes in it!

Agnès: Since *Reservoir Dogs*, he's kept that jacket, in T051 anthracite grey that doesn't crease. Everyone loved it because a suit that doesn't crease is pretty good, for aeroplanes and all that.

Loïc: I agree. But tell me, was there a masterplan from the beginning?

Agnès: No, to begin with, I said to myself, I'm going to be peaceful: I'll spend my days in the shop and I'll go home at night. The apartment was painted all black, while in the shop there were birds flying around inside.

Loïc: There were really birds inside the shop?

Agnès: We had 35 in the end.

Loïc: So agnès b. was improvised?

Agnès: I wanted to be a museum curator when I was young, then I got married when I was 17, had the twins when I was 19 and left my husband when I was 20.[33]

Loïc: That's pretty wild.

Agnès: Then I worked at *Elle* because they'd noticed me. I didn't have a choice; I had no money at all, no one gave me any money. I had to make things work, so I started selling my drawings. I'd take my bottles back for the deposit and buy two slices of ham or a tin of tuna to feed the children in the evenings. We would have a chicken every three weeks; we weren't unhappy though. Then May 1968 happened and I was obviously in the streets. I was with my twins and my parents were saying, 'We don't want you to stay in Paris', but I was like, 'Yeah, yeah, but I'm having a great time. We're having fun; it's great'.

Loïc: And the brand was started in…

Agnès: Nineteen seventy-six. It was unisex to begin with, workwear, anonymously designed clothes, and that's what I loved about them. I've always been against the idea of consumerism, so I make clothes that can be worn for 20 years and never go out of fashion.

Loïc: Clothes that aren't superfluous.

Agnès: Nothing superfluous that can go out of fashion. You can wear them for a very long time. This thing I'm wearing now, I've had it for at least 15 years.

Loïc: The idea being to enjoy life itself more than the clothes.

Agnès: I do things instinctively, that's how I work. Also, I like people and I want to make them happy. That's the gift for me – giving other people pleasure so they're happy with what they have. Lots of customers stop me in the street and tell me stories about their clothes. It's really touching because a piece of clothing can be like a talisman, something that reminds you of a happy memory. A piece of clothing can mean so many things.

Loïc: Has there ever been a time when you have felt less sincere in your work or has it always been like that?

Agnès: I have always been the same.

Loïc: So you set up the label in 1976…

'Harvey Keitel still has his agnès b jacket; the ones they all wore in *Reservoir Dogs*. He told me they found it in storage and it still has bullet holes in it!'

14.

14. A souvenir of *Let's Get Lost*, Bruce Weber's film about Chet Baker (1988), in which Baker wears agnès b.

© Bruce Weber and William Claxton

Agnès: And we had to find a name, because when *Elle* first featured my clothes, I was at my father's office, which was at my grandmother's, and the magazine asked what name to put for the credit. So I said, 'Oh, you may as well just use Agnès B.', like in a crime story where they don't put the full name. I didn't want to use Bourgois, he was a publisher, and I wasn't going to use [my maiden name] Agnès Troublé, so I said just use Agnès, B, full stop, and that's how it happened.

Loïc: Troublé is a lovely name though.

Agnès: Troublé? No, and I didn't want to take Christian's name, and my father was a lawyer, president of the bar. I like that agnès b. just came out like that. I love ideas that come out of nowhere like butterflies. You have to catch ideas, watch out for them, and they come.

'I saw Bowie during his Berlin period, wearing a pleated brown suit. I gave him a pair of jeans with a note, saying, 'You should stick to rock'n'roll style.''

Loïc: Why did you launch the free publication, *le point d'ironie*?[34]

Agnès: When I got married my father offered me a rug from the Caucasus and the *Larousse du XXe siècle* [encyclopedia] because he'd always seen me reading the Larousse on the rugs at home when I was a kid, aged 8, 9 and 10. I was always reading the Larousse and so he gave me that as a wedding present, when I was 17. And then 20 years ago, I wanted to do an exhibition about irony in art, the irony in artistic creation. I thought it was very interesting, so I looked up irony in my Larousse and what do I see? The irony punctuation mark. And I thought it was beautiful, I didn't know it existed, like a back-to-front question mark. And so that was why we called it *le point d'ironie*, and then we didn't need to trademark the name because it's in the public domain, even if no one ever remembers about the irony punctuation mark. I just loved the idea of it – instead of having a smiley, we have the irony punctuation mark. My dream would be for it to become…

Loïc: An emoji?

Agnès: Yes! We haven't taken care of it; I don't know who to ask. I wouldn't know where to start with that…

Loïc: So it became a magazine?

Agnès: Yes, it became our free magazine, which I publish with the idea of dispersing art. It was created during a lunch with Christian Boltanski and Hans Ulrich Obrist, and I said why don't we do a magazine that we can hand out for free? I'll produce it with artists who want to make their work known. We're now on number 61, with big artists. We give eight pages to the artist to do what they want.

Loïc: Tell me about David Bowie. How did you meet?

Agnès: It was me. I love live music and I went to see him at Bercy and it was his Berlin period when he wore a brown suit with pleats.[35] I gave him a pair of jeans with a note in the pocket, saying, 'You should stick to rock'n'roll style'.

Loïc: No, really? Like a little put-down or wake-up call.

Agnès: Yes, and I think he liked it because he later went and bought four pairs of leather jeans at the agnès b. shop in London and asked me to dress him.

Loïc: You gave him a pair of leather jeans?

Agnès: Yes, a pair of agnès b. black leather jeans; I've been making them forever.

Loïc: So has all the money from your clothing label gone into the contemporary-art foundation?

Agnès: I don't know. There are also the charities we support, and Tara, the ship. She is my contribution to ecology, and has been doing oceanographic research for the past 12 years. It's the ship I bought with Étienne; it was Sir Peter Blake's, the one he was killed on.[36] I bought it from Lady Pippa Blake to continue his oceanographic research. I think we give €600,000 to fund the ship; it's my contribution to ecology. That's why I always say the rich should share, because I am certainly a lot less rich than others.

Loïc: How do you build your art collection? Do you do it by yourself?

Agnès: There is someone who manages it, but I buy the works myself from auctions, and galleries and dealers I'm friends with. Like I did with my Warhols. Sometimes I go to artists' studios directly, and people come and see me, too. There are lots of ways, and there's also the Beaux-Arts.

Loïc: Do you know the first names of everyone who works for you or are there too many people?

Loïc: Of course I do! There are 135 of us; we're like a Breton village, like Hœdic, we're the same number as the residents of the isle of Hœdic.[37]

Loïc: Really? Yes, you're right, they must all know each other on Hœdic.

Agnès: Everyone knows each other on Hœdic, especially during winter; in summer there are 3,000 people, but in winter, only 135.

Loïc: Have they adopted you?

Agnès: They asked me to be Hœdicaise and I said yes.

Loïc: How long before they asked you?

Agnès: Oh, it was very quick.

Loïc: When did you start going there?

Agnès: Twenty years ago. We were in Brittany and went to the island on a day trip in a sailing boat. Then I went to the town hall and asked if there were ever any houses for sale there. And the woman there said, 'Yes, my parents' house is for sale', and she gave me the key and told me where it was and told me to go visit. So I did and by 3pm, I'd agreed to buy it. It's a small village house between two other houses.

Loïc: I'm sure that wasn't very Hœdic of you. Surely you should have thought longer than that.

Agnès: Yes, but it was super. It was completely brown, the doors were brown, the shutters were brown.

Loïc: Did you get Peter Marino to come and redecorate?

Agnès: Of course not! We just painted the shutters blue, the house white, and we called it Lis de Mer,[38] and I made a little *lis de mer* from shells on the facade. When I go there, once I'm on the boat, I say to myself, 'That's it', and it's like I drop anchor. We have so much fun. I have some very good friends there too. The people who run the bar, the fishermen; we've had friends there, ever since I've been going. When I first went there, there was a wedding and I started laughing and dancing, and I made friends with the shopkeeper, and I am still great friends with her; I like her very much.

Loïc: So you're more at ease with them than you were with the fashion people at the Élysée?

Agnès: Yes absolutely. I just didn't find the Élysée very friendly; I saw everyone pushing each other for the photos.

Loïc: I thought that was funny. I was sitting next to Stella McCartney; she was in a great mood and very, very funny.

Agnès: I would have liked to meet her. But no one introduced anyone to anyone.

Loïc: What time is it?

Agnès: I don't know.

Loïc: You don't know what the time is? Don't you have to work? Actually, I don't know what time it is either.

Agnès: I don't have a watch. I've never worn a watch, I don't like them. I don't even have my phone with me.

Agnès once picked me up in Paris in a Cadillac. She had to vote, but didn't like who she had to vote for and I remember her lighting her ballot on fire. That was pretty funny. She was wearing fingerless mittens and smoking a cigarette.

Agnès lives life in a very poetic way. She invented her own world, and she's a radical, a free spirit, and a collaborator. She came to me a couple of years after I started out, and has supported my movies and my artwork. When I was living a bit of a crazy life, Agnès was one of the people who helped me get things back together. I've always just thought of her as a great friend. She's one of my favourite people in the world, and in her own way, a real visionary. Agnès collects the works that she really loves and shows the artists she loves at the gallery; she collaborates with them on the clothes and other projects. She has helped finance movies that I've made in the past, and we've done books together. I always like to include her and try to get her opinions on things; it's very free-flowing.

Hers is a countercultural pursuit. Even though she has a huge company and is responsible for everything, she's not corporate, just the opposite. It's about a style and a life as opposed to anything else. There is nobody like her. What's fun is that she's not really making distinctions between high culture and low culture, but simply gravitating towards the things that excite her: from the street up to the palace. And she knows everything! She has affected a lot of people's lives. She's an ass-kicker, and someone who lives her life with a great sense of style and passion. I think she knows how much I love her!

Harmony Korine

Film director and artist Harmony Korine and Agnès B.

I first met Agnès when she invited me to her hotel-room party in SoHo, after she'd been given my first little book. When I arrived, it was filled with her friends, some from New York and many from Paris. People were drinking Champagne, smoking spliffs, standing on chairs and reading poetry. I was the youngest person in the room but immediately felt at home with my new French crew.

She bought a lot of my photos from that first body of work, which helped me get on my feet as an artist. I was able to move out of my small East Village apartment and rent a loft in Chinatown as my art studio. My first exhibition in Paris was at her galerie du jour. I never travelled much as a kid because my family couldn't afford it, so it was my first time ever being in France. And when I wanted to do my first road trip, but needed a large budget to take photos for two months across the USA, Agnès was there. I proposed the idea that she fund it in exchange for me showing the work at her gallery. I hoped that collectors would buy the work and I could pay her back. She believed in me and the money was soon deposited in my bank account. A few months later, we hung my show at her space and I was able to pay her back what she had invested in me.

She was the first person to treat me with respect, kind of celebrate me like a rock star, and show me the good life. She saw what I was doing in the streets of Manhattan should be held in high regard, and definitely helped boost my confidence and self-esteem as an artist. Ultimately, she's loyal to the artists she loves; she's like our cool older sister or surrogate mother.

Ryan McGinley

Ryan McGinley and Agnès B.

Whenever I am asked to go to Paris, for whatever reason, I always say yes. Not for the reasons given to me, but because I immediately see Agnès's shining face. Agnès is always happy. Agnès has transcended the sadness of this world. Happiness is contagious, and we need more of it, especially today.

I first met her in 1996 on the day the American Center in Paris closed. I was supposed to have a show there, but as it had closed, Agnès just said, 'Why don't you come and show at the galerie du jour?' That's how we began working together. That's also when Paris became my second home. No artist could be luckier. Because when Agnès does something, she puts herself completely into it, she puts her heart into it.

I have to tell you another wonderful thing about Agnès. She is the youngest of my friends because she is eternally young. And that's also why she is attractive; she is always surrounded by young people. And countless young artists have received their first shows at Agnès' gallery. Like them, I am very lucky that she came to my aid when I needed it, with her support, with her shining and love. I am very, very blessed to know Agnès and be her friend. Agnès is my Paris!

Jonas Mekas

Filmmaker Jonas Mekas photographed by Agnès B.

Retrospective

1. The agnès b. headquarters are situated at 17 Rue Dieu, near Place de la République, in north central Paris.

2. On March 5, 2018, French president and first lady Emmanuel and Brigitte Macron hosted a dinner for 120 key fashion-industry figures, including executives, manufacturers, and designers, including Jean Paul Gaultier, Maria Grazia Chiuri, Marine Serre, Alber Elbaz, Stella McCartney and Rick Owens. It was the first *dîner des créateurs* hosted by a French president since October 1984.

3. Jérôme Dreyfuss is a French handbag, shoe and accessories designer; he is married to designer Isabel Marant.

4. After having fled the Russian Revolution with her wealthy parents, Hélène Gordon Lazareff studied ethnology at the Sorbonne in the 1930s. She moved to New York with her husband Pierre Lazareff during the Second World War, where she worked for the *New York Times* and *Harper's Bazaar*. Upon their return to Paris after the Liberation in 1944, she co-founded *Elle*, which was first published on November 21, 1945. She stepped down from the magazine in 1972 and died in 1988. Agnès was a fashion editor at the magazine.

5. *Qui êtes-vous, Polly Maggoo?*, a satire of the Parisian fashion and art world, was directed by American photographer William Klein and released in 1966.

6. Jacqueline and Élie Jacobson opened their shop Dorothée in 1959 on Rue de Sèvres in Paris; in 1962, they enlarged it and renamed it Dorothée Bis. Jacqueline began designing a label with the same name in 1964.

7. The Autumn/Winter 2018 collection was shown on March 5, 2018, at the Palais de Chaillot, Paris.

8. French rapper Nekfeu was born Ken Samaras in 1990. He released his first solo album, *Feu*, in 2015. His second album, *Cyborg*, was released in December 2016. For the Autumn/Winter 2018 show, he collaborated with Agnès on a collection of mainly black sportswear-based pieces.

9. Every agnès b. show is opened by a selection of looks created by a new designer. For the Autumn/Winter 2018 show, Laure-Hélène Vaudier, an illustrator who works at the label, presented six looks.

10. The label's 'artists t-shirts' are regular collaborations with artists, such as Futura and Kraken, whose work appears on agnès b. T-shirts.

11. La Place: Le Centre culturel HipHop, located in Les Halles, a shopping mall in central Paris, is a cultural centre dedicated to hip-hop. It is close to agnès b.'s original store on Rue du Jour.

12. The École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Paris is the French capital's most prestigious fine-arts school. It was founded in 1648 and is located at 14 Rue Bonaparte.

13. Jean-Charles de Castelbajac is a French fashion and lifestyle designer best-known for his brightly coloured, light-hearted, pop-culture- and art-infused design aesthetic.

14. The '35 heures' is the name given to the law reducing the French work week from 39 to 35 hours. Originally introduced in 2000 and made compulsory for all French companies in 2002, the reform aimed to stimulate job creation. Its actual effects on the French economy have been hotly contested since its introduction.

15. A French law that came into force in July 2015 bans small advertising signs from being placed outside villages of fewer than 10,000 inhabitants. Environmental groups, which campaigned for the law, say it aims to reduce 'visual pollution' in the countryside. Businesses that do not comply now risk a fine of €7,500 per sign.

16. Ryan McGinley is now represented by Team Gallery, New York; Ratio 3, San Francisco; and Galerie Perrotin, Paris.

17. *Jacques Henri Lartigue* was held at the galerie du jour, November 10, 2017-January 13, 2018.

18. In his will, Jacques Henri Lartigue gave all his photographs, notes and diaries to the French state; the gift is managed by the Donation Jacques Henri Lartigue.

19. In 1971, Lartigue published *Diary of a Century*, a book of his photographs created in collaboration with Richard Avedon, who wrote in the book's afterword: 'Jacques Henri Lartigue appears, in my opinion, as the most penetrating photographer and one whose apparent simplicity is the most misleading.'

20. *The Other Side, Boston, 1972-1974*/*Hi Girl, New York City, 1990-1991*, photographer Nan Goldin's first show at the galerie du jour, was in 1991.

21. *Plastic Sax*, painted by Basquiat in 1984, takes its title from an acrylic British-made Grafton instrument played by jazz saxophonist Charlie Parker during a concert at Massey Hall, Toronto, in May 1953.

22. The Basquiat exhibition at Yvon Lambert in Paris ran January 9-February 4, 1988. The artist died later that year, on August 12, of an opiates overdose.

23. Born in 1981, Claire Tabouret is a French painter now based in Los Angeles. Her solo show, *Les Insoumis*, was held at the galerie du jour in 2013.

24. Once owned by King Charles I of England (until he was beheaded), Titian's *Man with a Glove* (c.1520) was later owned by French monarch Louis XIV (until he died of gangrene). It has hung in the Louvre since 1792.

25. Jean-René de Fleurieu met Agnès when he was 23 and she was 32. Together, they founded agnès b. and opened the first shop on Rue du Jour. He now produces olive oil and wine at the Château de Montfrin in the south of France.

26. Philippe Michel, who died aged 53 in 1993 after a heart attack, was a leading advertising executive throughout the 1970s and 1980s. His agency was behind what remains the most (in)famous campaign in French advertising. A series of four billboard posters, the first simply showed model Myriam Szabo on a beach and appeared in late August 1991. The second showed her standing on a beach wearing a bikini with the tagline, 'On September 2, I'll take my top off'. In the third, she was topless, next to the tagline, 'On September 4, I'll take the bottom off'. In the final poster, she stood bare-bottomed with her back to the camera next to the words: 'Avenir: the outdoor advertising company that keeps its promises.'

27. Ten francs in 1988 is the equivalent of €2.45 in 2018.

28. Militant activist group Act Up-Paris was created in June 1989 to raise awareness of AIDS and fight for better treatment and drugs for those infected with the disease. It was celebrated and criticized for its often confrontational direct actions, most famously, covering the obelisk in Paris's Place de la Concorde with a giant pink condom on December 1, 1993.

29. This was most likely during the Day of Despair organized by Act Up-Paris on April 4, 1992. Pierre Bergé, Yves Saint Laurent's professional and romantic partner, was involved in Act Up-Paris from its creation.

30. Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina, was besieged by the Bosnian Serb Army for 1,425 days from April 1992 to February 1996. Nearly 14,000 people were killed during the siege including over 5,000 civilians.

31. Founded by Rodolphe Clair in 1992, Première Urgence, now called Première Urgence Internationale, is currently working in 21 countries to help victims of humanitarian disasters.

32. Dark agnès b. suits are worn by all the main characters in Quentin Tarantino's 1992 debut feature *Reservoir Dogs*. In his second, *Pulp Fiction* (1994), they are worn by the gangsters played by Samuel L. Jackson and John Travolta.

33. Agnès's first husband was Christian Bourgois (1933-2007), who founded the publishing house, Christian Bourgois éditeur, in 1966. The b. in agnès b. comes from his surname.

34. The publication *le point de l'ironie* was created in 1997. Six to eight times a year, an artist is invited to create an issue, 100,000 copies of which are then distributed for free in shops, galleries and bookshops around the world.

35. The concert attended by Agnès was part of David Bowie's *Isolar* world tour, which showcased the album *Station to Station*. It ended with two nights in Paris on May 17 and 18. Bowie did indeed wear a three-piece suit on *Isolar*, but did not, as Agnès remembers, play at Bercy. The two concerts were held at the Pavilion de Paris, better known as Les Abattoirs. The 10,000-capacity venue was demolished in 1980.

36. New Zealand yachtsman Sir Peter Blake broke the record for the fastest circumnavigation of the globe in 1994. In 2001, while on an environmental mission to monitor global warming and pollution, he was killed by pirates aboard his ship *Seamaster*, while anchored off the Brazilian coast; he was 53.

37. Hœdic is an island 30kms off the south coast of Brittany in the Gulf of Morbihan. It is 2.5kms long and 1km wide.

38. *Lis de mer* (*Pancratium maritimum*) or sea daffodil, flower on Hœdic in August and September.

Photographer's assistants: Olivier Hersart and Vincent Gussemburger. Digital operator: David Martin. Make-up artist: Régine Bedot. Hair stylist: Tuan Doan at l'atelier(68).

‘What Chengdu wants, Chinese millennials want.’

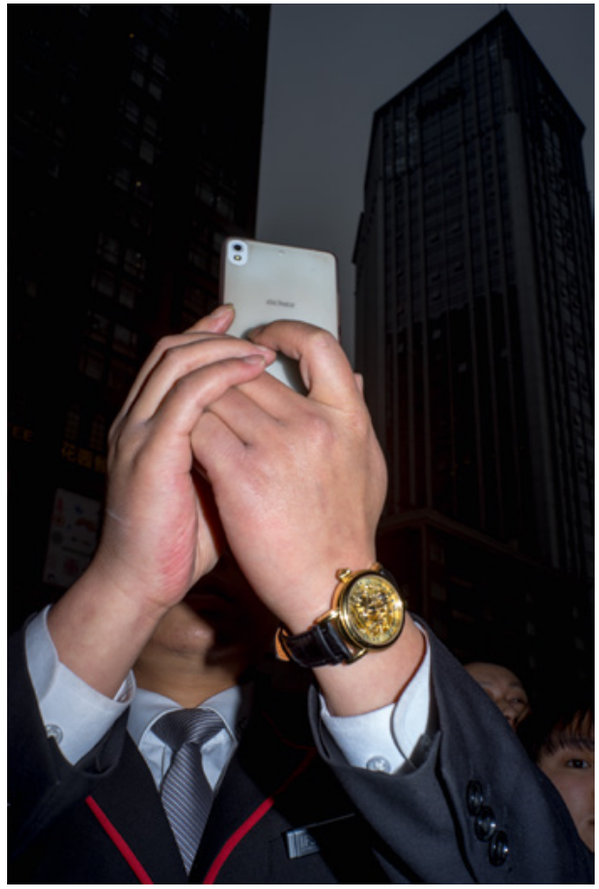
Welcome to China’s new luxury playground.

By Hung Huang
Photographs by Feng Li
Styling by Vanessa Reid

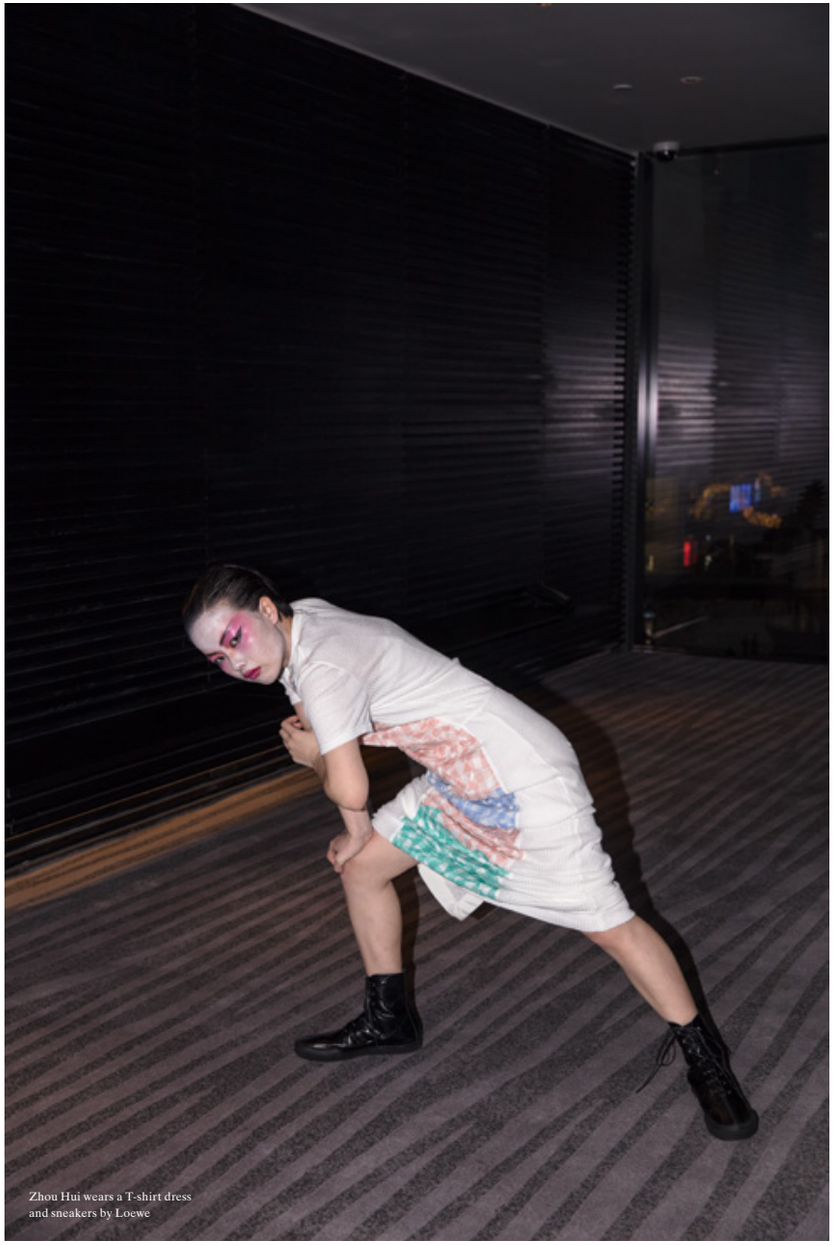
Qing Min wears a coat, shirt, socks, sandals, bag by Prada

Zhang Haomin wears a jacket, skirt, cape, boots and bracelets by Chanel

Peng Xianxian wears a coat and bag by Proenza Schouler



Jia Lian wears a coat, dress, shirt, socks and sandals by Miu Miu



Zhou Hui wears a T-shirt dress and sneakers by Loewe

K7 wears a dress, tights and earrings by Balenciaga

Wan Han wears a trench coat, shirt, trousers by Céline. Boots model's own

Tian Peinxin wears a dress, boots and ring by Versace

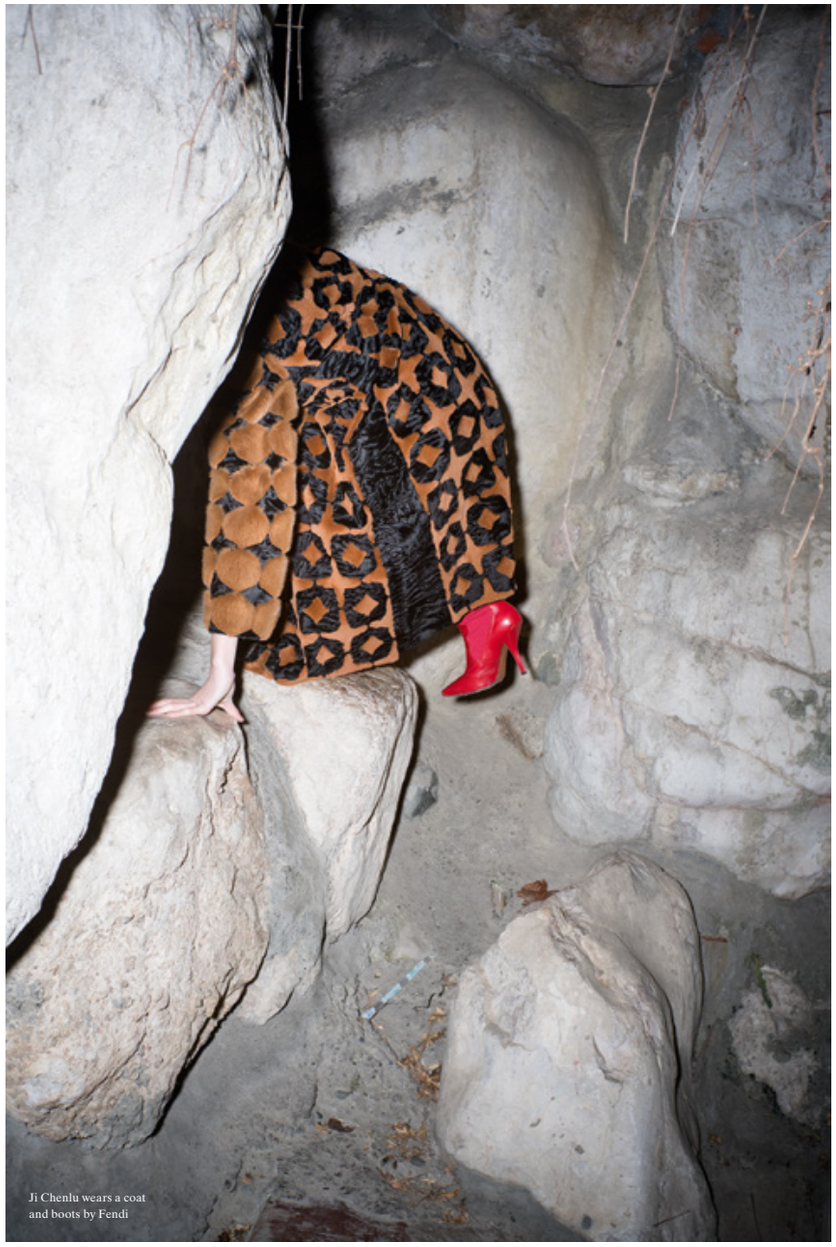
Qiao Pan wears a dress, earrings
and shoes by Saint Laurent

Seventeen wears a dress, shoes and manchettes by Givenchy

Zhang Huijun wears a shirt, skirt, knit,
gloves and shoes by Calvin Klein 205W39NYC

Qing Min wears a duster, dress and mules by Calvin Klein 205W39NYC

Jia Lian wears a dress, hat, stockings, sandals and bag by Missoni



Ji Chenlu wears a coat
and boots by Fendi

Lei Siyi wears a sweatshirt, belt,
cardigan, skirt, shoes,
bracelet and rings by Gucci

Ou Wenyu wears a jacket,
belt, top, slip, pants, shoes,
bag and ring by Gucci

Zhou Hui wears a dress by Valentino

Da Cheng wears a dress,
shoes and hat by Yohji Yamamoto

Tang Yuhan wears a jacket, leggings and bracelets by Junya Watanabe

Qiao Pan wears a dress, shorts
and pumps by Saint Laurent

Zhang Huijun wears a redingote and trousers by Louis Vuitton

Liu Yuying wears a shirt, trousers, boots and ring by Chloé

Photographer's assistant: Starr Wan. Models: Qing Min, Zhang Haomin, Liu Yuying, Ou Wenyu, Lei Siyi at JVogue; Wan Shanshan at Elite; Tian Peinxin at Style; Jia Lian at NSR; Zhang Huijun at SMG; Qiao Pan, K7, Peng Xianxian, Zhou Hui, Tang Yuhan, Da Cheng, Ji Chenlu, Seventeen. Hair & make-up: Daniel Zhang at Flame Studio. Manicurist: Jenny Li at Merci Beauty. Styling assistants: Josephine Dorval, Yang Zhou, Sophie Valero. Casting director: Walter Pearce at Management+Artists. Casting assistant: Emma Zheng. Production: Sherry Ma and Vengo Huang at Flame Media China. Production assistant: Kay Zhang. Special thanks to: Chengdu IFS, Sino-Ocean Taikoo Li Chengdu, Temple House Chengdu, Georg Rulffes at Concrete.

Wan Shanshan wears a pyjama jacket, trousers and ballerinas by Dior

His name is Deng Hong. Deng is the family name, like Deng Xiaoping, also a man from Sichuan province, of which Chengdu is the provincial capital. In 2011, Deng Hong wanted to invite Lady Gaga to do a concert in Chengdu. Despite my protests, a mutual friend convinced him that I was the person who could bring her to Chengdu. I was instantly given a first-class ticket to fly to the central Chinese city and when I arrived, a peach-coloured Rolls was waiting for me at the VIP exit.

I arrived at one of Deng Hong's properties, an InterContinental Hotel, where he was waiting for me in the lobby. A middle-aged man with a crew cut, he was dressed in a peculiarly chic yet local gangster style: short-sleeved summer shirt over a long-sleeved T-shirt, Nike sneakers, and a pair of nondescript dark grey dress pants.

He immediately escorted me to a dining room, explaining on the way that tonight was his corporate New Year gala, the Chinese equivalent of the annual office Christmas party, yet nothing like a Christmas party. His whole family was at the dining room table, his son who had been at public school in the UK had just been shipped back to Chengdu and given a street stand selling local kebabs.

'I want him to know how to survive in the streets of Chengdu,' Deng said in a booming, proud voice. 'Show aunty your hands,' he commanded his son. The boy, who was about 18, showed me his hands covered with scars and scratches.

'From preparing *chuan chuan*, on the street?' I asked.

'Yes, and I was burned by burning oil once.'

He rolled up his sleeves and showed me a horrible scar on his forearm. Then he quickly buttoned his shirt sleeve and withdrew his hands. His voice lacked the pride that filled his father's voice. The entire table gasped about the scars and roughness of the young man's brutalized hands. The more everyone pleaded with the father to let his son work at a normal job, like in an investment bank, the more determined Deng became about keeping his son on the front line of street food in Chengdu.

Eating is a big thing in Chengdu. *Chuan chuan* are Chengdu kebabs: meat, vegetables or a rich type of tofu on a skewer. A boiling pot of oil is placed on low tables on street kerbs, diners sit on small stools with a garbage pail for the skewers between their legs, looking as if they are preparing to throw up. The skewers of meat, vegetables or whatever are cooked in the boiling oil, dipped in a spicy sauce and eaten. *Chuan chuan* are the most popular street food of Chengdu. I hate them.

The dinner was finished in a hurry and we were rushed to the gala, which was held in the hotel's largest ballroom. Inside were close to a thousand of Deng Hong's employees waiting for him. When he entered, they all stood up and cheered, as if he were a rock star.

The gala evening was a mishmash of singing, dancing, and short skits performed by different departments in Deng Hong's real-estate empire. There were several Lady Gaga 'Poker Face' performances, a lot of local pop-star tribute acts and quite a few K-pop performances. Aside from lasting three and half hours, the amateur performers were not all that bad. When it finally ended at 11pm, I was extremely relieved. But as I tried to leave, one of Deng Hong's assistants gestured me to sit down.

To my surprise, Deng Hong got on stage, still dressed in his gangster-chic outfit. He took over the mic and started to give a commentary on the first performance. As he spoke, a man quietly carried two large hemp sacks onto the stage next to him. 'Your performance tonight is like your work: it's alright, but not very exciting; there is no detail and no innovation,' said Deng. 'For that I will give your department 150,000 yuan' – about $20,000 – 'as your year-end bonus!'

Applause! Applause!

Then to my astonishment, Deng reached into the sack and threw a thick wad of cash towards the head of the department he had just critiqued. The man was standing not far away and managed to catch every bundle of red 100-yuan wads without dropping one. The same routine went on for about two hours; the audience, Deng's employees, remained highly excited as cash flew around the room. This is how year-end bonuses were distributed in Chengdu.

People from Chengdu have a different relationship to money than people in the rest of China: they have more fun making it, spending it and even losing it. It is a city with its own sense of *joie de vivre*. I was told that serious business in Chengdu was conducted in teahouses and at mah-jong tables, not in boardrooms. Before the Internet age, Chinese employees had to sign a pay slip when receiving their monthly salaries, and it is said that in Chengdu, the personnel department would need to chase down employees in tea houses to sign the pay slip every month.

'People from Chengdu have a different relationship to money than people in the rest of China: they have more fun making it, spending it and even losing it.'

'In Chengdu, we like to live a little, but I work a lot because my work is play,' Deng told me, while showing me his properties around Chengdu. 'Look at this,' he said, pointing to the almost finished New Century Global Center,[1] a truly huge complex of nine floors of restaurants, shops, an indoor water park, ice rink, nursery schools, spas and beauty salons. Above this massive commercial complex sat a hotel, offices and residential units.

It was a Chengdu gangster interpretation of Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation and it was Deng's vision of the city he wanted to build. Like many visionaries before him, he had no formal education in architecture. When he was young, he studied classical Chinese paintings. Later, he managed to get a US green card and started a business organizing trade shows. Eventually, he returned to Chengdu and became the city government's favourite private entrepreneur. He was invited to construct the buildings for trade shows, and then organize them. He owned multiple concert halls and stadiums, each surrounded by commercial and residential properties that allowed him to become one of the richest men in Sichuan.[2]

When I met him, he was about to sign a contract with the late Zaha Hadid for yet another exhibition and performance centre in Chengdu. He showed me his drawing of the building and told me, 'I showed this to Zaha, and she said, "Why do you need me? You can design it yourself already".'

'Why *do* you need her?' I asked.

'I know how to pour concrete, too,' Deng replied, 'but it doesn't mean I have to do it myself.'

Despite his hospitality and my eye-opening experience, my trip to Chengdu proved fruitless; I had to inform the gangster tycoon that I couldn't bring Lady Gaga to sing for him.

Right after I left the city, my friend told me that Deng Hong was buying a string of islands in the Pacific Ocean. He had great plans to make them a holiday paradise for the new Chinese middle class. Unfortunately, the next news I heard about Deng Hong was his arrest as part of a massive corruption scandal.[3]

Fast-forward to late 2017 and Chengdu has changed. No longer in its gangster-tycoon phase, it has become the target all luxury companies want to hit in China. Because, despite not being the richest city and only the eighth most populous, Chengdu is the third biggest luxury market in China, only just behind Shanghai and Beijing. Indeed, in some categories, like cosmetics, Chengdu has become the best-selling city in the country.

And the reason is the young: Chengdu has become the de facto youth-culture epicentre of China: what Chengdu wants, Chinese millennials want. *Honour of Kings* – a mobile game so popular among the young in China that its owner Tencent felt obliged to limit access to children to one or two hours a day – was created in the city. It is home to a hugely successful pop culture. Chris Lee, pop star and the face of Gucci and L'Oréal in China, is from Chengdu, as is the current hottest reality-show-winning hip-hop band. When one member of TFBoys, the most popular boy band in China, decided to celebrate his birthday, he chose a 20,000-seat stadium in Chengdu – and filled it.

So it should come as no surprise that Chanel chose Chengdu for its first luxury runway show in China.[4] The turnout was fantastic, and most importantly for the fashion industry, those attending were not representatives of old money. The audience was all young and it was dripping in Chanel. Chengdu had never looked so smart.

1. When it opened in August 2013, the New Century Global Center, built by Deng Hong's company Exhibition & Travel Group (ETG), was the building with the largest floor area in the world (1.6 million square metres). Now the second largest, it has been renamed Global Center.

2. He was listed as the 290th richest person in China on the 2013 Hurun Rich List with a net worth of around $1 billion.

3. Deng Hong was arrested by Chinese authorities on November 8, 2013, charged with illegally acquiring and selling land, invoice forgery and tax evasion, and engaging in fraudulent loan schemes. He then disappeared from view. He has since resurfaced and returned as chairman of his company, ETG. A January 18, 2018 article in the *Pacific Island Times* reported that he still had plans to create the Pacific island resort. The resort on Yap, an island in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), was first announced in 2012 with 10,000 hotel rooms and a casino, but ground has still not been broken and the controversial plan has been scaled back to just 1,500 rooms and no casino. Four days after the newspaper report, Deng Hong made a rare public appearance when he visited Yap to discuss the project, accompanied by FSM's ambassador to China; despite making reassuring signs, he did not sound optimistic about its future.

4. The Chanel show took place on November 7, 2017. It was a restaging of the house's Grecian-themed cruise collection 'The Modernity of Antiquity', first shown in May 2017 in Paris.

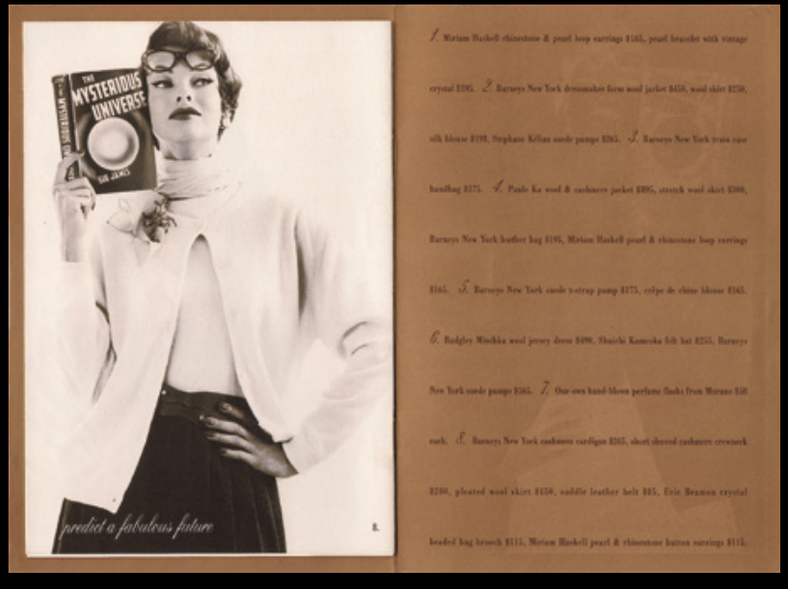
‘Barneys was a unique little oasis.’

Creative director Ronnie Cooke Newhouse revisits the 1990s Barneys ad campaigns that saw her work with a cast of Steven Meisel, Linda Evangelista, Glenn O’Brien, several lobsters and a chimp.

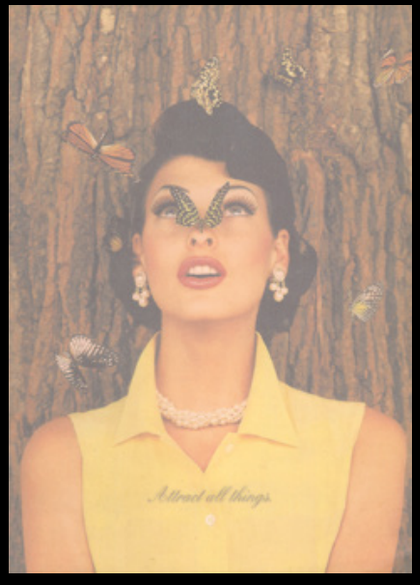
Interview by Thomas Lenthal

©1991 Barneys New York
Attraction sometimes involves a few tricks.
BARNEYS
NEW YORK
Barneys New York pump $175, blouse $165
NORTHPARK CENTER DALLAS 214 692 5222 THE GALLERIA HOUSTON 713 622 3636

Previous page: Barneys 1991 campaign image featuring Linda Evangelista photographed by Steven Meisel.
This page and opposite: Barneys 1991 mail-out catalogue featuring Linda Evangelista photographed by Steven Meisel.

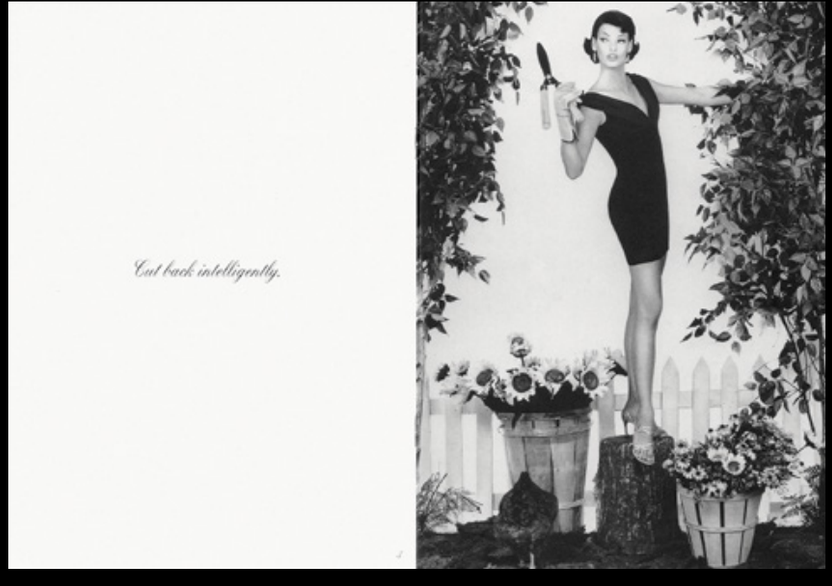


Barneys 1991 mail-out catalogue featuring Linda Evangelista photographed by Steven Meisel.

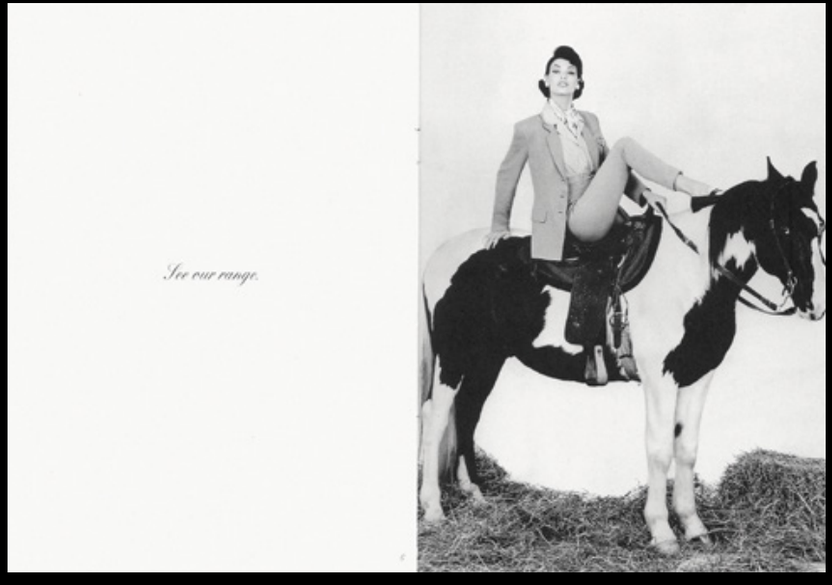


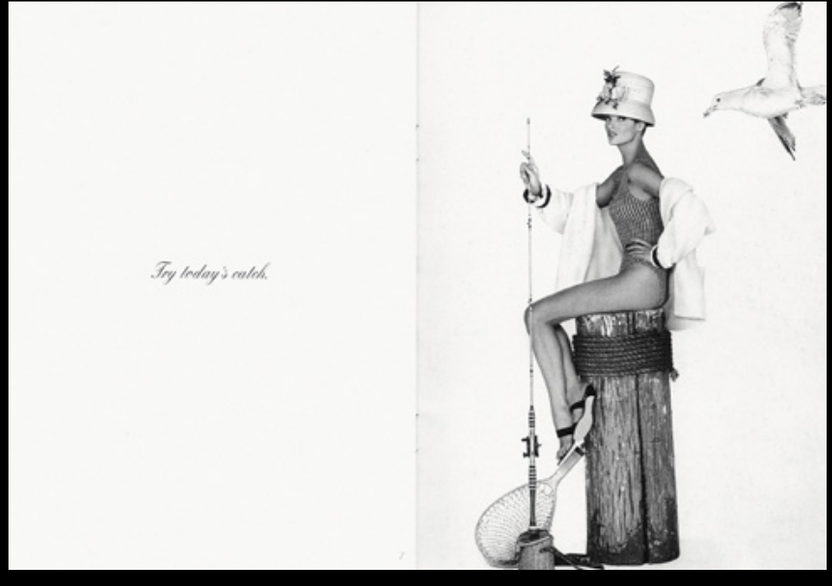
This page and following pages: Barneys Japan 1992 catalogue, featuring Linda Evangelista photographed by Steven Meisel.

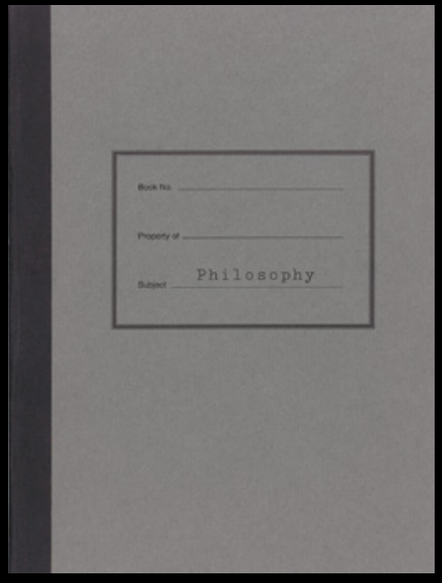
Prepare for the best.



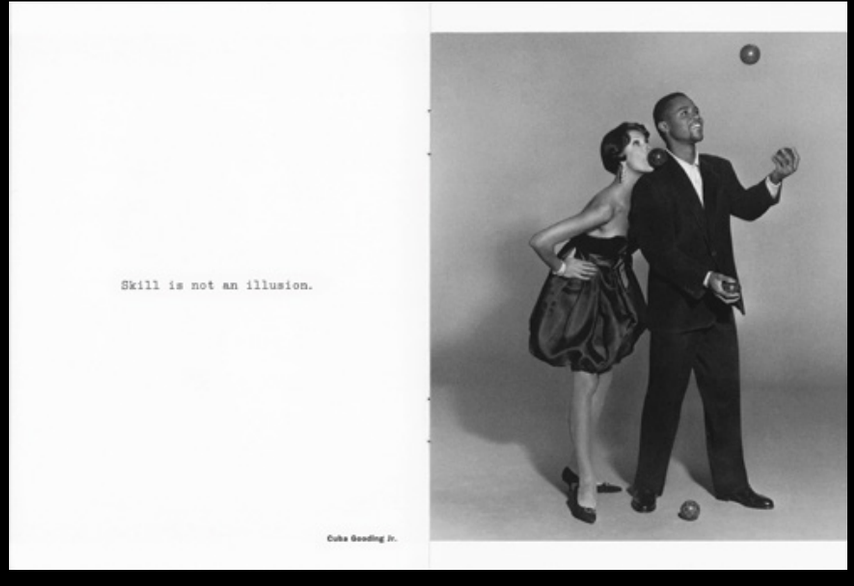
This page and opposite: Barneys Japan 1992 catalogue,
featuring Linda Evangelista photographed by Steven Meisel.







Barneys 1992 *Philosophy* catalogue, featuring Linda Evangelista and Ryuichi Sakamoto photographed by Steven Meisel.

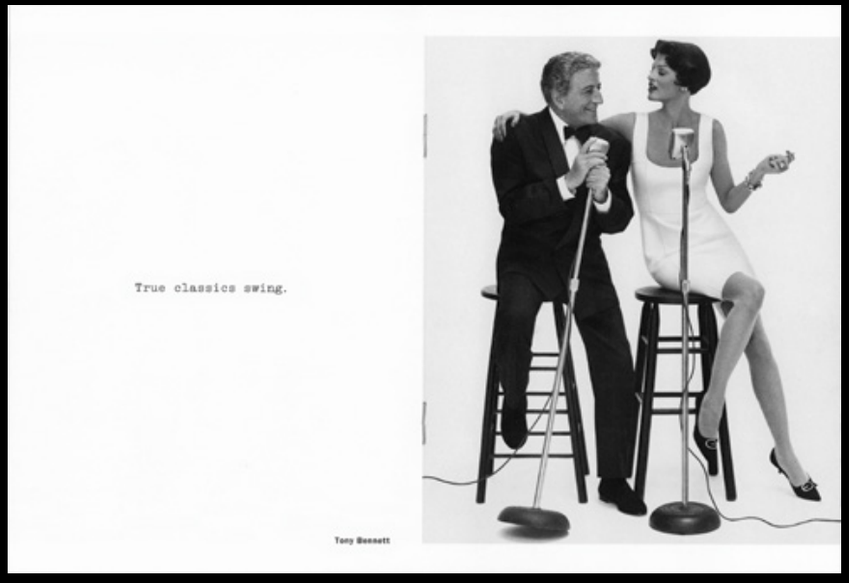


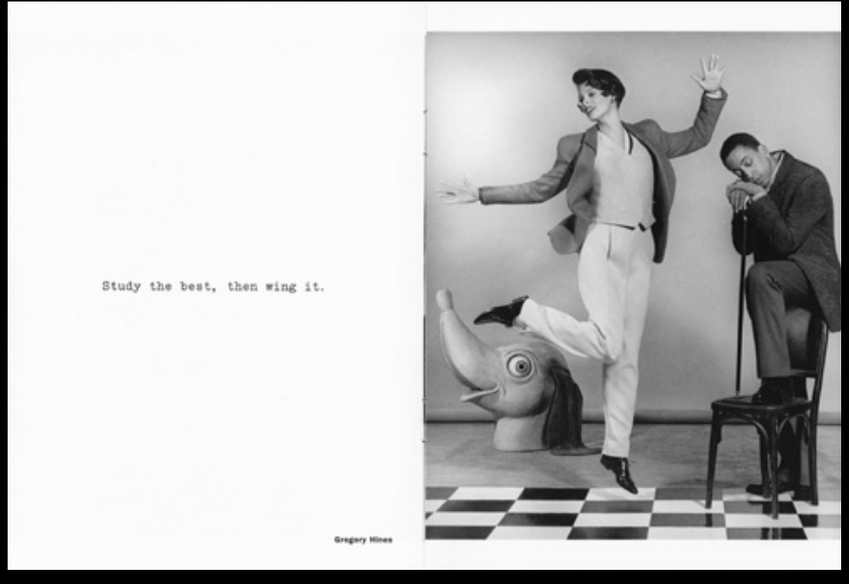
Barneys 1992 *Philosophy* catalogue, featuring Linda Evangelista, Grant Show and Cuba Gooding Jr. photographed by Steven Meisel.

Thought should be lofty, thought should be deep.

Linda Evangelista and Kyle Maclachlan

Barneys 1992 *Philosophy* catalogue, featuring Linda Evangelista and Kyle Machlachlan photographed by Steven Meisel.





Barneys 1992 *Philosophy* catalogue, featuring Linda Evangelista, Tony Bennett and Gregory Hines photographed by Steven Meisel.

Barneys 1992 *Philosophy* catalogue, featuring Linda Evangelista, Val Kilmer and Fred Ward photographed by Steven Meisel.

In 1923, a clothing store at 7th Avenue and 17th Street in Manhattan went out of business. The store's lease, fixtures and stock – 40 men's suits – were bought by a man named Barney Pressman with $500 raised, legend has it, by pawning his wife's wedding ring. He renamed his new store Barney's and began selling discounted, though good-quality men's clothing for 'less-affluent customers who had Champagne tastes but beer budgets', as the *New York Times* put it. To promote his store, he began a Barney's tradition of investing in innovative advertising, including matchbooks given out by women wearing barrels and radio ads with the *Dick Tracy*-esque tag line, 'Calling all men to Barney's'.

Barney's son Fred, who took over the business in the mid-1940s, stuck with the store's basic principles – quality menswear, altered for free, at reasonable prices – but introduced New York's men to European chic including Givenchy and Pierre Cardin. Then in 1978, Fred's son, Gene, persuaded his father to let him open a small women's department, setting in motion the process of transforming the store into a go-to shopping destination. Over the next 15 years, Gene and his brother Bob added new designers (Giorgio Armani was first sold in the US at Barneys), opened new stores – such as the Peter Marino-designed women's store on 17th Street opened in 1986 – and commissioned photographers such as Herb Ritts and Nick Knight to shoot ads, renewing the brand's image and reputation along the way.

With the passing of 1980s moneyed glitz and shiny glamour, Gene Pressman decided to take Barneys' ad campaigns in a new direction, and in 1990 hired Ronnie Cooke Newhouse as creative director to work alongside writer and man-about-town Glenn O'Brien. By then, the company had dropped its apostrophe, expanded into Japan with the help of Isetan, and was deep into planning its ultimate coup: moving its main store uptown to a huge space on Madison Avenue, again designed by Peter Marino.

These big steps were matched by the memorable campaigns that Cooke Newhouse delivered between 1990 and 1995: a series of witty, visually challenging and sometimes downright silly campaigns, often shot by Steven Meisel and featuring the era's best-known faces, particularly Linda Evangelista. The images of supermodels and monkeys, hot actors and lobsters, combined her visual direction and O'Brien's text to meld downtown sass and uptown sophistication, in the process bringing Barneys' communications defiantly up to date and buttressing the company's daringly irreverent image during its rapid expansion. And in the process, Cooke Newhouse and O'Brien proved that fashion advertising didn't necessarily have to be po-faced and that humour could – and still can – boost sales.

Earlier this year, Ronnie Cooke Newhouse met with *System*'s Thomas Lenthal to discuss her era-defining work for Barneys, the difference between uptown and downtown, and the precarious future of today's department stores.

Thomas Lenthal: Before you became creative director at Barneys, you were at *Details*, right?

Ronnie Cooke Newhouse: Yes, I was one of the magazine's founding members. It was a very different landscape back then. We were outsiders, part of the emerging downtown voice of New York in the 1980s. The fashion and advertising worlds were far more advanced in New York than anywhere else at that time. And when I left *Details* in 1989 – because we were closed down, not by choice – I had to think about what I wanted to do next. I was offered editor jobs but I didn't think I wanted to work in a magazine; I felt my magazine chapter was over at that point. I didn't really know what I wanted to do. I had studied painting. I'd been to graduate school. I had an MFA. So to start with, I was absolutely not doing what I was supposed to be doing. I never figured it out, still haven't, and I like that!

Sounds familiar!

After *Details*, I did some writing for Ingrid [Sischy] at *Interview*, as well as a project that included Martin Margiela. He was very kind and contributed to this fax project, when fax machines were new. I also wrote for various other magazines, and I travelled, and finally went to Mac school.[1] But I just didn't know where I belonged. *Details* had been such a place of belonging and it was such a community of like-minded people and that became a very important theme in my life.

You mean working with that group of people?

Working with really interesting elevated people, who were very cutting-edge, whether in music, art, or literature. That was stimulating. Then in 1989, Gene Pressman,[2] who was the son of Barneys' owner called me and said, 'How come you haven't called me about the creative director's job?' Fabien Baron, who'd previously been there, had left to go to Calvin Klein, and I guess everyone wanted the Barneys job. And I said, 'Because I don't know what I want to do, I'm trying to figure it out'. And he said, 'Well, come and talk to me'. And so, I did. And then he was like: 'OK, Cooke' – Cookie, whatever he called me – 'you got two days to figure it out.' I had always loved Gene and the family, and I liked the idea of working for a family business. Then a friend said to me, 'You know, it's not a prisoner-of-war camp, if you don't like it you can always leave', which had never occurred to me! So, I thought about it: they had always done some of the most memorable New York advertising; they worked with the greatest minds on Madison Avenue, when those advertising agencies were really significant. I remembered all the great Barneys ads. Then Gene set up an in-house agency and went in a fashion direction, leading the pack. So, it seemed like the right time and the right place to be. Glenn O'Brien[3] was already there working as a writer.

Full-time?

No, he wasn't full-time. I sort of knew Glenn peripherally, and we met up and knew lots of the same people. In a funny way, it was like a macho club, but they loved women. And so I went to Barneys and stayed for about six years until I decided to get married, which meant moving to London. And Gene and his family said the only way I could leave was for love, otherwise I wasn't allowed to leave! It was a very formative time, probably one of the most formative times in my life. Gene Pressman would say: 'It had better be great; it had better be original; I'd better not have seen it before; you better wow me.' And in those days, I had to produce like a thousand mailers, print campaigns, outdoor, radio and TV commercials, some of the forgotten media platforms now.

You had a team of how many?

I think there were about 17 people.

So the main players at the Barneys advertising agency were Gene, yourself and Glenn.

Yes, and we had someone who worked on the media, but it was such a small core group, Glenn and I did mostly everything. Gene would come to my office to have meetings; we would discuss everything and show him everything. He wouldn't come on shoots, but we presented everything. It was all very planned; it wasn't arbitrary at all…

Tell me about the roles you and Glenn played at Barneys. How did that dynamic function?

I would tell Glenn what I was thinking about visually, my ideas. The dialogue had to start out with something funny. We always laughed hysterically, and we also fought a lot. Like the time he wanted to do a campaign with guys in suits on surfboards. And I was like, 'Glenn, we are *not* doing that!' So, we would fight about starting points, but most of the time I would come to him with something and we would think about the voice it needed together. That was so interesting for me because I had always thought about words alongside visuals, but it's so hard to do in fashion, and most of the time, it is so horrible. He was unique because he came as an avatar of pop culture, with an understanding of music, art, fashion, poetry and everything in-between. He *was* downtown New York when it was full of this cast of fantastic characters. We shared that and had references that made sense to each other.

From a European perspective, Glenn was the embodiment of that consummate downtown New Yorker who could give uptown institutions some hip gravitas. That's how I felt about Glenn.

He could move between uptown and downtown, at a time when there was a big divide. It's funny because Annie Flanders, who was the founding editor of *Details*, used to say when she got mad at me: 'You're the only one here who could work uptown!' As if that was a terrible insult.

That is very funny. Could you paint a picture of New York's fashion advertising landscape at the time?

There wasn't much. There was Calvin Klein, who in my view really invented the idea of what we now know to be the blueprint for today's advertising image-making – the idea of branding. I think he heralded that in the late 1970s and I think should be given credit for it. It certainly changed so much with him; it was the beginning of something modern. Which is why I went to work with him as his creative director after Barneys.

'Barneys' owner Gene Pressman would say: 'It had better be great; it had better be original; I'd better not have seen it before; you better wow me."

'I thought Steven Meisel was the ultimate fashion photographer. He represented what was going on and what was cool, like a barometer of pop culture.'

When was that, the late 1990s?
Yes. There were a few others, but they weren't as consistent as he was. Calvin used to say to me: 'The only place I can hire from is Barneys because it's the only other modern institution.' There were others. Ralph Lauren was important, because it was very American, but it was a different thing. It was interesting and incredibly well done, but it was a different trajectory and ambition. It was a utopia, but a different one.

You were at Barneys from 1989 to 1996, and the collaboration between Steven Meisel and Linda Evangelista was in 1991 and 1992?
I think it was 1990, 1991 and 1992. We just evolved all the time; we worked with Steven for a while, then we did a campaign with Corinne Day. That was a palette cleanser, and the beginning of the unplugged fashion era.

What did Steven represent to you at the time?
I think I saw Steven as someone who was very downtown and uptown. He was the ultimate fashion photographer who I often saw out with amazing people including Warhol. He represented what was going on, like a barometer of pop culture and what was cool.

He was a hip name?
Yes, he was in a way, but he was also very *Vogue*. Even when he did 1950s glamour, it just kind of made sense. Steven was pure fashion, but he also gave context to what was going on around him. I think he's the greatest living fashion photographer.

Did you think that back then?
Yes. In a fashion context, he was like no one else. I mean there were other photographers who were doing other amazing things, but he was a hero.

I seem to remember that this was a moment when Steven was working almost exclusively with Linda. He would do an entire year of *Vogue Italia* covers with her. Why was that?
Because Linda was an extension of Steven's vision, and they were amazing friends. We didn't have a stylist on the shoots. I brought along the clothes, edited them down into a range of what we had to cover for the buyers, and then Linda and Steven would just kind of do the rest themselves. It might have been my stupidity of not really understanding, but there weren't really that many freelance stylists at the time. They worked at magazines. And I just thought Stephen and Linda could do a better job together. Because it seemed like Steven could do everything.

The results were good though! Typically, how many shoot days would it take to do one of those mailers and ad campaigns?
Maybe two days... He shot the campaign and I always designed a mailer besides the print campaign, with the images to send to the customers.

Did you arrive with specific references or concepts?
Yes. I knew exactly what the sets should look like. I started at Barneys in the middle of a recession, which wasn't great, so I wanted to make the advertising a bit like the original *Flair*[4] magazine, but with a combination of beauty and humour. It was sort of an amalgamation of the movies I had watched, mixed with memories: 1970s indie-style movies, Audrey Hepburn and Cary Grant glamour. There were also very camp influences; I was probably more influenced by the Lower East Side drag shows.

So you would bring in pictures of those movies?
No, I think I put together drawings and layouts. I would look at the images and Glenn would sit on the desk facing me and write the text on Post-its. He would write, and I would say, 'That is terrible, that is amazing', and we would laugh. My basic thinking was, 'Well, if the economy sucks, we may as well entertain ourselves'. Barneys' ground floor was an inspiration – it was like something from the golden era. It was very glamorous in the way that movies were in another era. I'd go to Europe with my family a few times a year on holidays growing up, and the ground floor always had that feeling of French and Italian speciality shops built in the 1930s, but a Wes Anderson-like take on them.

An American sophistication.
Yes. For me, Linda's red hair was very Lucille Ball, which made me think of the comedy with the monkey, *Monkey Business*.[5] So we decided to get a monkey in.

And the image with Linda and the butterfly, that was completely prepared I would imagine?
Yes, there was a TV show called *Green Acres*,[6] in which Eva Gabor goes to the country, and it was quite like that. The thing about Linda was that she had a great sense of timing and comedy; with another model you couldn't have done that. She was more than a model; she could have been a glamorous comedian. And that's very appealing, this supermodel with a large character. And it was all just ridiculous!

The thing is that New Yorkers like humour, there is a tradition of humour, and Barneys advertising always had that tradition, too, which was also smart. It was still always about selling, so introducing humour into fashion was a scary thing to do. Steven has the best sense of humour and Linda was his muse, but he was also terrifying to me back then. He could be scary because of his mind and talent; they were intimidating those two. But also so fun. Almost no one did sets back then, and Steven was like: 'Where are we going to find a set designer? We'll need to get a Hollywood film person in.' Simon Doonan,[7] who was the greatest window designer, employed a freelancer named Bill Doig, who in his spare time sold antique furniture, and was a very quirky guy. I had Bill work with me on these sets, and we did a lot of it together. Then literally, throughout shoots, I would stage different surprises. For example, I had a truck arrive with a whole load of chickens inside and when Bill opened the door of the truck, out flew the chickens and Linda reacted for the camera. I kept this going all day long, like TV-show entertainment. Because I had read somewhere that directors kept their actors entertained in order to get reactions. I was kind of learning on the job!

Tell me about the dynamic between Linda Evangelista and Steven Meisel. They were the best of friends, right? They seemed to be constantly shooting together?
They were always together; he was very close to Linda, Naomi [Campbell] and Christy [Turlington]. Linda was very willing to experiment and change her hair colour for each shoot and become a character. I think he must have found he could reinvent her all the time, quite *Pygmalion*-like.

Back then, Steven Meisel seemed to be very interested in American aesthetics between the 1930s and the 1960s. It was almost all about Hollywood, it felt very musical and very upbeat. Was that also a conscious thing for Barneys back then?
I don't think we thought that deeply about it! It was really a question of what amused us. I think it just made sense. Also, we were attracted to periods that were really stylized, that had aspects that were timeless and influential – and I think Steven was, too.

How did people respond internally at Barneys?
They absolutely loved it. Mr. Pressman, Gene's father, was a huge supporter of the work I was doing. And it wasn't just the campaigns, it was all the mailers and other stuff that I worked on with a lot of designers who were part of Barneys. A lot of houses didn't have their own identity back then. Now you couldn't do any of the things I was able to do then because today every house is so defined by its own identity. They don't come to you now and say, Oh sure, do what you want. So even with notable designers we were trusted to do what we wanted, in a sense. We would think about the brand, but we always had to think about Barneys and that was why it was so different from any other department store and looked so modern. We didn't take a house and create a mailer that looked like that house. It always looked like Barneys; we'd take that house someplace else. It was very creative and new, and everyone knew those were the codes and they accepted it and wanted to be part of it. But it could never happen again. We had a small-space ad on page two of the *New York Times*, a few times a week, for which we always photographed still lifes. There would be the credit information, but also Glenn would write anecdotes about what was going on politically that week. I would be watching David Letterman and he would be holding up that day's *New York Times* with the ad, laughing about something written in it that was completely taking the piss out of whatever was going on. So, we were political, and yet it was also all about showing original products, with humour and culture.

What are your thoughts about Barneys and the slow demise of the American department store? It seems that they are a dying breed.
I think it's sad that department stores are struggling, but maybe they haven't kept up. And when all the designers opened up their own brand shops around the world that are these spectacular places and offer a more complete collection, it is hard to compete

'Barneys' ground floor was an inspiration – it was like something from the golden era. It was glamorous in the way that old movies are.'

'The thing about Linda was that she had a great sense of timing and comedy. She was more than a model; she could have been a glamorous comedian.'

with that. And I don't think department stores have figured out what their role should be – and there is a role. I think there is a way to save them, but I think they have to be a hell of a lot more daring. They have to be more daring in their buying and more daring in how they show things. They've gone very corporate; it's not very interesting.

But what happened to Barneys?
It's under different ownership,[8] and I think you can't beat the passion of the Pressmans; it was infectious. I mean it was with them that Peter Marino's career blossomed.[9] They launched a lot of careers.

Did the uptown building, which was designed by Peter Marino, already exist in 1990?

'It's sad that department stores are struggling today, but maybe they haven't kept up. I think they have to be more daring in how they show things.'

No, just the downtown building. He had done part of the downtown space already, when he was still wearing a bowtie and khakis. Barneys didn't exist uptown at that point, nor in LA. Nor did many of the others. Peter Marino did the uptown building while I was there; we opened it in 1993. Actually, this is a good moment to clear something up. This is really key: for the opening of the uptown Barneys, I had seen something on my media-buyer's desk — advertising space on taxi tops. I mean, they were only ever used at the time by the likes of Virginia Slims[10]…

…or strip clubs.
Or accountants. All very low profile. And I said for the opening of the uptown shop: 'Let's buy every taxi top in New York, it would be amazing.' So we did a campaign with Jean-Philippe Delhomme's artwork. One side said, 'Going Uptown' and the other side said, 'Going Downtown'. And that was the first time anyone in fashion had ever used taxi tops. Some journalists have claimed that Helmut Lang was the first, but we were way before, and we continued to use the taxi tops.[11] We kind of owned it, then we stopped, and Helmut continued it.

I understand that for Gene Pressman, money was never an object. Is that true?
That's why they don't own it anymore!

It certainly felt like that. It just felt so generous, the whole Barneys proposition. It was very joyful to look at and really inspiring. Compared to what was going on in Paris in the 1980s and 1990s, it felt intelligent and beautiful and precise and well-made.
Paris had the clothes, but we had the image.

It was considered vulgar in Paris for fashion brands to advertise. I remember Saint Laurent advertising through their cloth manufacturers; it was drapers who paid for it.
Sometimes when I am in the *Vogue* library, I'll look at French *Vogue* and American *Vogue* from the same time period and it is interesting to see the big differences. French advertising remained very 'local' at the time.

The Americans were way ahead, the French were still back in the 1950s in terms of how they envisaged communicating about fashion. It was like, We don't need to, we're the best.
It's amazing how everything's changed.

I sometimes wonder if it's about the freedom or the clients. I bet Mr. Pressman must have been a pretty demanding customer, but he was supportive and understood what you were doing. How different are clients today to Gene Pressman?
Budgets were smaller compared to today. There were fewer people on shoots; there weren't countless assistants. There are so many more deliverables now for so many different platforms and formats. Around the same time, I worked on some cosmetic projects and that was like going back in time 40 years. Barneys was a kind of unique little oasis. If the designers have freedom, then I do too. That simple!

You have already mentioned Simon Doonan. Was he already at Barneys when you were there?
He was always at Barneys: he worked on the windows and all the visual merchandising, and when I left he kind of moved a bit into my place. Simon was great; the head buyers were as well. It was a really special group of people. Even the difficult ones were great. It was really passionate, and being difficult because you're passionate is very tolerable.

And everyone knew for sure they were the best at what they were doing, and that Barneys was the best place to be doing it?
It felt like I was at a great graduate school, and I was getting my PhD. I was totally hooked. I felt like I had found my metier. Now that's a good conclusion!

1. In the early 1990s, Cooke Newhouse attended classes run by Apple to teach new customers how to get the most out of their Macintosh computers.

2. Gene Pressman was co-CEO of Barneys (alongside his brother Robert) for 27 years. Among the brands he introduced to the store were Giorgio Armani, Comme des Garçons and Manolo Blahnik. Robert and he oversaw the company's expensive gamble on expansion uptown and downtown in New York, countrywide in the US, and into Japan. He was also responsible for advertising and creative direction. In an August 1993 interview with the *New York Times*, in which he was described as 'charming and quick-tempered, flamboyant and at times wildly profane', he summed up his philosophy as: 'Fashion is Hollywood – it really is'.

3. Glenn O'Brien was a downtown polymath, who during his 45-year career worked as a writer, book and magazine editor, TV presenter, copywriter, style maven, creative director, screenwriter, art critic, stand-up comedian, and creative director. His career began as a student in 1971 when Andy Warhol hired him to work at – and then edit – *Interview*. In 1978, he co-created (with Chris Stein of Blondie), and began presenting, *TV Party*, a public-access (parody) TV talk show whose guests included Blondie herself, David Bowie, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Steven Meisel and David Byrne. O'Brien became a creative director at Barneys in 1988. He repeatedly told media outlets that the work of which he was most proud was having been the legs and crotch in the photograph on the inside cover of the Rolling Stones' album *Sticky Fingers* (designed by Warhol). O'Brien died in April 2017 aged 70.

4. *Flair* magazine was created by journalist, artist, editor and socialite, Fleur Cowles (1908-2009), as an extravagant vanity project aimed at the New York elite. Published between January 1950 and February 1951, it was known for its innovative design – including cut-out covers, pop-ups and varied paper stocks – and a who's-who contributor list: writing by Tennessee Williams, Jean Cocteau, W.H. Auden and Simone de Beauvoir; visuals by Picasso, Lucian Freud, Saul Steinberg and Joan Miró. Despite a cover price of 50¢ – expensive for the time – each copy still lost the magazine's owner, Cowles' husband, Tom, 75¢. He closed it down after 12 issues; Fleur Cowles is said never to have forgiven him.

5. *Monkey Business*, directed by Howard Hawks and co-written by Ben Hecht, starred Cary Grant, Ginger Rogers and Marilyn Monroe. The 1952 film, whose trailer promises it to be 'four-star formula of fun', tells the story of what happens when a laboratory chimp discovers an elixir of youth.

6. *Green Acres*, a sitcom that ran on US network CBS for 170 episodes from 1965 to 1971, starred Eddie Albert as a successful lawyer who decides to leave Manhattan and move to the countryside, accompanied by his reluctant Hungarian socialite wife, played by Eva Gabor.

7. Best-known for his witty and beautiful window displays, Simon Doonan is a self-described 'writer, bon-vivant, media personality, famous window dresser, creative ambassador-at-large for Barneys New York'. Having been at the company since 1986, he was replaced as creative director by Dennis Freedman in 2011. Freedman was replaced by Matthew Mazzucca in 2017.
8. The Pressman family lost control of Barneys in 1996. It is now majority owned by hedge fund Perry Capital.

8. Peter Marino is a New York-based architect known for his personal style (leather biker gear, leather cap, aviator sunglasses), his large art collection (Anselm Kiefer, Georg Baselitz, Andy Warhol, Robert Mapplethorpe), and his ability to design stores for almost all major luxury brands, from Louis Vuitton to Chanel to Armani. He designed the downtown and uptown stores in New York for Barneys.

9. Virginia Slims is a brand of cigarettes aimed at female smokers. The brand's advertising has always positioned its product as an instrument of female emancipation, notably through its celebrated slogan, 'You've come a long way, baby'.

10. Helmut Lang's official website states: 'Helmut Lang was the first designer in history to advertise on a taxi top in 1998.' To mark the 20th anniversary of this event, it released a 'limited edition taxi capsule collection' in December 2017.

Over the past few months, there has been much discussion in both the established and social media about sexual harassment allegations, the treatment of models, and the questionable road towards making a fashion image. In light of this, we have been asking ourselves an uneasy and uncertain, yet important question: ‘What is the future for sexualized imagery and nudity in the world of fashion?’ We felt that the younger generation currently involved in fashion and its image-making might be most credibly placed to answer that.
So we asked them.

'People need to remember that photographing a living being is a collaboration. You don't own an image of someone, you share it. And by those standards, both parties need to be involved in the end product.'
Harley Weir, photographer

'Sexualized imagery is all about the situation. Nudity for me is quite different because you can be extremely sexual while being totally covered. Overall, after seeing so many women showing themselves nude and calling for feminism, maybe it is time to find an equilibrium. Women used to need to copy male outfits to feel in a more equal position, then we realized we were still being sexualized. Maybe the future is to actually assume sexuality, and also nudity, in a normal way and not as a provocation.'
Marine Serre, designer

'As long as respect is maximum within the entire artistic team, no space will be left for any doubtful behaviour. I truly believe that your freedom stops when it steps on another person's freedom. By bearing that principle in mind, the creative process of a sexualized or non-sexualized imagery should remain untouched.'
Paul Hameline, model

'I absolutely think there is a future for sexual imagery in fashion. I think an image can be classified as sexual or sexy, with or without nudity, purely based on the subject looking empowered, confident and energetic. To me, this is pushing the boundary of what a sexual image is, mostly because the photographic gaze has changed as of late. Communication, knowing what to expect on set, and the subject feeling not only safe, but also excited and inspired to be portrayed in this way is very important in the creation of these images. A sexual image will always test the accepted comfort levels of the culture surrounding it. As culture changes, sexual imagery and image-making changes. Right now, that change is looking more and more positive, and I hope it continues this way. I cannot comprehend the notion that you have to have an unhealthy objective relationship with the subject in order to produce a sexual image. The issue is the people behind the images, not the visibility of the sexualized body. It is inspiring that women and men have been reclaiming their voices and speaking out against this way of working. As a woman, it is an exciting time to be thriving in a historically male-driven industry, and to be creating images of women with women for women. Saying that, I think this question should also be open to the male photographers, models, stylists, designers of this new generation. It is not us against them. There is more scope for change if we work together.'
Emma Wyman, senior fashion editor, *Dazed*

'I never saw the naked body as a big deal. I think the world in which we live has too many preconceptions on what the naked body and sexualized images should look like. It is wrong to assume one's idea of sexuality will match the stereotyped idea of it that the media are offering. I only very rarely find a fashion image sexy that is supposed to be charged with sexual energy. But who can still find this idea sexy? Maybe heterosexual and gay men who find the abuse of power attractive? Luckily for me, I don't know many men who do.

I think a lot of the fashion imagery created in the 1980s with nudity was about a model (female or male) portrayed as being owned, inferior and ready to please the eyes and perhaps the body of the photographer. That was the initial mistake, which led to the years of abuse that are now coming to light. I have never found ownership, domination or submission sexy. And I don't think you'll find many people in my generation who do. I find equality, curiosity and dignity sexy. The naked body has been in art from the beginning of art, and I think it should remain in it, but only if it is done from a place of mutual respect, interest and equality, not abuse.'
Coco Capitán, photographer

'The main problem that needs to be tackled in the fashion industry is unchecked power and ego. I hope this is a total sea change of morals and manners on every level of the industry, and things that were considered normal just won't be OK any more. Image content is another thing – it's the process of getting to the image where the sexual abuse and endemic bullying culture has been happening. Sexualization in fashion and art is something else and is a powerful topic that should be handled carefully, but abuse in real life is totally different. Certainly the theme of the shoot should not dictate people's

'Fashion transitioned into a new era where our art is no longer judged only by the beauty of the images, but also by the integrity of its makers.'

behaviour. Beauty standards and propriety evolve naturally from the culture that they are born out of, so this will no doubt have an impact, but we'll probably only be able to see it properly in hindsight.'
Tom Guinness, senior fashion editor, *POP* and *Arena Homme +*

'My nudity in my work, and even my sexuality, is just as empowering now as when I started. However, this comes with confidence, experience and safe surroundings. For the future of nudity in fashion, the changes have to happen behind the scenes: clearer communication, healthy collaboration, and a greater understanding of power in relationships on set.'
Mica Arganaraz, model

'Sex and nudity have been a part of image-making since the beginning of time. Sex is a fundamental part not only of our visual language but also of human life. In fact, without it, there is no life! Images are my primary vocabulary, so suggesting that images should never be sexualized is akin to compromising my freedom of speech. We need to be sensitive to how those images are made and what we are saying with them.

A major cause of the abhorrent sexual abuse and mistreatment of models, stems from a massive imbalance of power. Even though in recent years, things have shifted away from the days of enormous budgets with teams flying out to exotic locations for weeks on end, it is undeniable that the money in fashion and the power of certain photographers and stylists to make or break careers, is still out of proportion. This has led to some individuals being totally out of touch with the effects of their actions and unchecked by those around them. There has also been far too little regulation of the industry and protection of models by their agents. The speed of turnover of models has increased exponentially over the few years and with that, a sense of expendability that makes me incredibly sad. I think it's fantastic that we are now having this discussion and that social media has given a voice to those previously unable or afraid to speak out about their experiences. But it is a very complicated subject and we must be careful not to oversimplify things. Primarily, we all need to make sure we are consciously part of a working environment that is safe, healthy and hopefully, fun!

What I've also been forced to question is how I should represent sexuality within my work. I think fashion is about creating characters that feel modern, fresh, relevant and aspirational. I always want the models in my work to feel strong, empowered and sexy, but the question that feels most relevant to me now is: what is sexy? What that might have meant a few years ago at the peak of the 'Victoria's Secret era' now seems outdated and I hope to be part of a generation of artists that can redefine what a more empowered sexuality can look like.'
Charlotte Wales, photographer

'The problem arises when a model is used as a passive tool in the creation of someone else's vision. Erotica in photography can be beautiful and pleasurable, as long as every participant is respected as a maker and enjoys the process of making. I want the naked woman in the picture to want to be naked in the picture.'
Olya Kuryshchuk, founder and creative director, *I Granary*

'I don't think this is the end of nudity in fashion photography, nor do I wish that to happen, but I do hope that we can see an end to young people being coerced into it or not being consulted about it. It feels like we are moving that way. Having been a model before getting into casting, I am doing what I can to further this process and sincerely hope that it's not just being viewed as just another trend.'
Ben Grimes, casting director

'I do think that fashion imagery is going to affected not only by the post-#MeToo atmosphere, but also by other things that are going on in the world. Everything is changing right now, is being questioned and brought to task. We can't go on as usual. Young people in general don't identity with the way things generally have been. Sexuality is much more fluid now, and I feel that they're documenting that. All the kids on Instagram are half-naked. I don't think that's going to go away because of #MeToo. But maybe it'll go away through the people who are working in the industry, the place where all the assets live.

The bigger question is: what's next? What is the future of sexualized imagery? I don't think we are necessarily going to see less sexualized imagery, but I do think that the way in which sexuality is portrayed needs to change. We've already

'After seeing so many women showing themselves nude and calling for feminism, maybe it is time to find an equilibrium.'

seen that from people like Harley Weir and Petra Collins, who are showing an exploratory femininity. Not derogatory, as we have come to accept as being the norm. A lot of it is also about who is delivering the work. I think sometimes Harley's pictures are super provocative, and if a male photographer is doing that, it would be perceived in a different way. Different points of view, from photographers who are of different races, sexualities and genders, means that sexuality will be perceived differently.'
Carlos Nazario, fashion director, *Fantastic Man*

'Fundamentally, fashion imagery is a vehicle for desire – for both people and objects. But nudity is not always sexual, and sexuality is not always the result of coercion or exploitation. Yes, selling a pair of shoes with a pair of tits both feels and looks retro; I have absolutely no interest in seeing images of women created with straight men, female insecurities or the Boschian hellscape that is the *Daily Mail* sidebar in mind. Saying that, I am wary of viewing any and all eroticism as the enemy and seeking to censor it; instead I'm hopeful that this moment will encourage regulations, so no model ever feels pressured into a shoot or situation they aren't comfortable with, and those commissioning imagery see this as an opportunity to prioritize the perspectives and gazes of a more diverse group of image-makers. How do they explore – and queer – ideas of desire, and what does sexuality look like for them? That's a future I'm excited to see.'
Emma Hope Allwood, fashion features editor, *Dazed*

'We will see a change in that the younger generation is increasingly confident with its own image. They have grown up seeing nakedness every few seconds, in many diverse forms, and they don't think much of it. I would think that going forward there will be even fewer limits to what we now perceive as acceptable, as minority groups are becoming part of the media's focus. Sexual harassment is a violation though and is not to be confused with sexual imagery. Of course, acceptance of the latter in an extreme form has contributed to the disillusion and consequently the former, but the two can be worlds apart.

I hope that there will be more protection from model agencies to prevent unwanted situations. But sexual images will be around as long as they are attractive. We find naked imagery attractive if it has an aesthetic that matches ours or which we can relate to. Of course, we are attracted to the human body – we are planned that way – and sex still sells! But it should be a natural and confident exchange. So what is a sexualized image going to look like? Virtual? Sensory? History has a tendency to collapse back on itself, but I would like to think that sexuality will include a more diverse range of imagery. Sexuality can be found in so many aspects of life, and this will be the challenge to embrace. There is already a greater amount of dead-meat nakedness, and less emotionally charged sexuality, and I wonder if sexuality won't become a more sought-after skill when we are so bombarded with bulging flesh everywhere.'
Bibi Blangsted, designer

'Women and men who are finding their voice and speaking out against the exploitation that has long been tolerated in fashion are an inspiration. Obviously, there is still a lot more work to be done. We need better protections for models, more diversity in casting, and we need to be more responsible with the body images we project to young women and men. I don't think provocative, sexual images are the problem. The problem is the predatory behaviour of people in power and those who turn a blind eye to it. We shouldn't start censoring the work at a time when more women are shooting than ever before. It's our right and our responsibility to reclaim the female body and explore our sexuality in a responsible, positive way.'
Brianna Capozzi, photographer

'It's important to question whose sexual fantasy we are feeding. I find it sexiest when a woman in a photograph has agency and is self-aware. Clothes or no clothes. Women need to have a choice and the power to make decisions of how they will be portrayed. They need to be collaborators and a relevant party involved in the process of making the image.'
Zoë Ghertner, photographer

'Nudity is important sometimes. Artists need to be able to do what they need to do to produce the images that they want to get. I think everything now has to be much more considered. This newer generation is more conscious of it, making sure

'I cannot comprehend the notion that you have to have an unhealthy objective relationship with the subject in order to produce a sexual image.'

that it is appropriate to their work, and it has to be authentic. If we are talking about fashion images, in fashion magazines and using models and nudity, at the moment, it's a very sensitive issue. At *Vogue*, we do not use models under 18, and that's really important. I don't think you need to see young girls without their clothes on to make a good fashion picture.'
Rosie Vogel, casting director and bookings editor, British *Vogue*

'The human body is highly political, we all know this. In my work, I find it important to propose images of emancipation, not domination. Nudity can be beautiful, especially when it comes to art. When it comes to the market, we have so much of this masculine point view (straight or gay) where the female body is a poor recipient of signs, lifeless. If you use nudity, at least let the models have a soul.'
Christelle Kocher, designer

'Working in fashion, I often feel that a lot of the industry is caught up in a hangover from the 1960s, when a lot of men became photographers, stylists or editors in order to hit on models. I can only speak from the perspective of a photographer, but I think there's always an inherent level of exploitation when making an image with a person as its subject. The power dynamic is always going to be uneven: the photographer has the final say in how someone is portrayed.

I don't think that nudity or sexualized images will become obsolete in fashion, but I do think that people will expect context and a justification for nudity in an image, especially when it's made by a man. As an example: why is this male photographer shooting a young model with her top off, when it's a jeans campaign? I don't want fashion to become too prudish, policed or restrictive, but hopefully people will be asking the right questions, and it'll become harder for those who seek to exploit to get away with it.'
Eloise Parry, photographer

'Integrity and freedom of expression.'
Kozaburo Akasaka, designer

'I feel fashion is changing, even at a slow pace, with nudity and sexualized imagery. There are now more hijab-wearing models and there is more model diversity, but I still feel there is a long way to go. Exploitation is so common in the fashion industry and more diversity at top positions is what's needed to change the content of sexualized imagery.'
Nicholas Daley, designer

'It will not be about exploiting sexuality, it will be about challenging the binary construction of sexuality.'
Julia Lange, casting director

'Nudity in fashion is so problematic, since if you put aside all the creative aspects of a fashion image, you are essentially using someone's body to sell products. I do think that with the younger generation of image-makers, the way the body is viewed and represented in fashion is changing. I hope that we'll be able to leave behind the culture that profits from objectification, as fashion imagery undeniably has an effect on the cultural gaze. I'm not against nudity or sexuality in fashion – we've done plenty of shoots presenting nudity and a broad spectrum of sexuality – but I think the context the images are being shown in, the intent of the photographer, and the consent of the model are extremely important. It has to be for the right reasons. For me, shooting nudes is about trust, permission and awareness of the subject. I think a lot of it comes down to creating a safe environment for everyone involved on set. If you see someone using their position of power for sexual exploitation, speak up.'
Tati Lëshkina, photographer

'There will always be a place for female nudity in fashion photography. As a woman and a model, I feel that under the right circumstances a naked woman can be an expression of female empowerment. If the female body, and especially the nipple, is liberated from censorship, it'll be normalized and celebrated as the beauty of female autonomy. The questions we need to ask are not only about the production, but also society's reception and consumption, of fashion imagery.'
Jess Cole, model

'There are certain principles that should be upheld within our industry. These include consent, awareness of the gaze, and regard for structural inequalities, among others. These

'I think sometimes Harley's pictures are super provocative, and if a male photographer is doing that, it would be perceived in a different way.'

are principles we always try to abide by and listen to others about. As individuals we have been very lucky not to have experienced these issues first-hand. We believe it is important to listen to and amplify the voices of those who have experienced such issues.'
Stefan Cooke & Jake Burt, designers

'Fashion transitioned into a new era where our art is no longer judged only by the beauty of the images, but also by the integrity of its makers. We as creatives have the power to channel art through the human body, but we also have a moral duty to ensure this is done with the utmost respect for the dignity and well-being of everyone involved in the creative process.'
Katie Burnett, stylist

'It's not about being a prude and thinking that there should be absolutely no nudity, no sensuality, no sexuality in fashion photography, of course, but about looking at the makers of these images and trying to figure out what the message they are trying to convey is. And it's not just about having women creatives versus male creatives either, as women can be just as good as men in serving the patriarchy. It's proof enough to look at the current wave of female photographers, who are not shy about showing the female body in all its beauty and in all its imperfections, who are not afraid about showing women in all their different facets – alone, with friends, crying, masturbating. It is almost a tender gaze, an understanding gaze, that results in images that can still be polarizing, that can still be provocative, but that in no way exploit the young women involved in creating them. It's not enough to *say* that you are for women, and for women's empowerment – the proof is in the images.'
Laia Garcia, deputy editor, *No Man's Land*

'When I walk into my darkroom at the beginning of the day and learn that I'm sharing the space with only women, I feel relief, joy, more motivation and less stress.'
Joyce NG, photographer

'I get really excited when I spend time or work with young people – like late teens or early 20s – because it seems the facades of superiority that are associated with traditional fashion image making are almost non-existent. It feels like reading and creating an image has become about its content again and less about adhering to this hierarchy.

If we get all these assholes out of the way – all these self-important exploitative egos – and we are all participating in the image-making process in a way that feels great for ourselves and everyone else on set, then perhaps the creation of fashion imagery will once again be a creative thing. And, most importantly, the exploitation of someone just won't have a place anymore.'
Sharna Osborne, film maker

'We shouldn't be scared to portray sexuality or include nudity in imagery we create, as long as it's carried out in a non-exploitative manner. But no one's worth can any longer be measured only by their sex appeal, which suggests their sexuality is separate from their personality and dignity. Our dysfunctional society shames us for being sexual, and we're shown ad campaigns which glorify passivity towards sexual abuse. We need to evolve the culture and not shy away from being sexual, but own it ourselves, and know our worth without being desired by others. We need to stop continuing to reinforce current gender stereotypes on future generations, and instead create work that speaks for equality and diversity. That will help to reinforce the economic empowerment and break down the socioeconomic restrictions female and non-binary individuals face, for example, when reaching for high positions in politics or other businesses.'
Anna Pesonen, stylist and fashion editor

'For the most part the discussion on harassment has been about the process of harassment and questionable behaviour involved in the making of the image, but not the imagery itself. I think as long as subjects are presented as 'available and willing', as they so often are, then I see this as a problem that won't go away. Within fashion, yes perhaps everyone is terrified to misbehave (for now at least), but within society in general I think it will remain a problem.'
Marc Hibbert, photographer

'I hope that taking preventive measures in order to avoid sexual abuse in a working relationship will not censor empowering

'I don't want fashion to become too prudish, policed or restrictive, but hopefully people will be asking the right questions.'

female imagery. The current questioning of female nudity demonstrates how it still seems to be only associated with sexual objectification. What's happened could make for stronger investment in young models' independence and protection: guidance to build stronger self-confidence through better agency and parental supervision.'
Linda Engelhardt, editor-at-large, *Marfa Journal*

'The issue here is not just the male gaze, but the perceived value the male gaze generates for itself when it is endlessly regurgitated by young male photographers who think they are the next Nobuyoshi Araki. The result is inevitably stifling, dull and hyper masculine, and it contributes nothing of interest to fashion or to the lives of women themselves. Time and time again we're told that this kind of work has value because it is cool, or irreverent, or subversive, but in the present day we are ready for sensitivity and novelty rather than stale patriarchal notions of cool. A moratorium might in fact be the hard reset that our very souls need.

So then: how would fashion imagery feel if it were made by women exclusively? I think of the photographers Lina Scheynius and Kava Gorna, whose work is at times wholeheartedly erotic and sexual, and yet does not feel prescriptive or regimented. When I look at their work, it feels separate, new and open: a lot like sex and love and nudity can make me feel in my real life. And no poor up-and-coming model had to pour milk all over herself under desensitised flashbulbs in a West Hollywood studio to get there.'
Ana Kinsella, writer and editor

'Nudity is the most beautiful state of a human – fragile and strong at the same time. In my opinion the problem is not nudity or sexualized imagery in itself, but the way these images are used. Using nudity in order to sell things degrades the body, makes it into an object, and usually asks for a certain unreal perfection of the body. In a world where men have ruled on all levels (and still do), women have always been the object and not the subject – the one to look at, not the one looking. I think it's important that women show their vision and, if possible, not one created by men for many years. We need to find our own language of portraying beauty, sexuality and nudity.

I don't believe female sexual empowerment comes from sexualizing yourself in uncomfortable outfits, rubbing oil on your body, making an orgasmic face and showing the power in this way. In my opinion you are still displaying a male fantasy. I also don't think wearing massive dungarees or dressing like a man, and making yourself an asexual being is the answer. The thing is that there is not yet any female language that originates from honest female thoughts and fantasies, and which have not been corrupted by years of male-led visuals. I do believe women are busy discovering this language, and I think that's where the challenge lies – to demand and create space for this female language in today's world, in art, in fashion, in everything really. In other words, trying to see what it is to be a woman in a visual world without comparing to or rebelling against men, and so show a new vision without being a victim.'
Janneke van der Hagen, photographer

'It is all about intention and a level playing field. When we collaborate with stylists, models, and photographers, everyone is in it together, with pure intentions. Nobody's opinion is above another, and nobody's concern is below. Working in a collaborative way with *all* parties is the only way that a group can make any kind of image that expresses its concept without the risk of offence or exposure.'
Michael Halpern, designer

'In the current climate, we need to consider whether what we are doing is positive for all parties involved and the industry as a whole. We should all think about two things when the subject of sexualized imagery is concerned. 1. Is nudity or sexualized imagery necessary to communicate what we want to say with this project? 2. Is the subject an adult and entirely comfortable with what they are being asked to do? If not, don't do it. It really is that simple. Nobody should be placed in an uncomfortable position when they come to work. Often we are dealing with very young subjects, new to the industry and their well-being is our responsibility.'
Gary David Moore, stylist

'In our common visual landscape, where interpersonal relationships hover around paid promotions interspersed by

'If the female body, and especially the nipple, is liberated from censorship, it'll be normalized and celebrated as the beauty of female autonomy.'

calendar reminders, Instagram influencers and sexualized fashion campaigns, there can be no single perspective on representation that doesn't in some way threaten to flatten another. Nudity in the eyes of the model, photographer or art director may have one meaning, but that meaning is skewed when the same image is served as an ad to 14 year olds. White female nudity is empowering to some and oppressive to others; black female nudity is crucial to some and fetishized by others. There is as yet no substantial way of cementing context around images online. The platforms are corrupt, but for now we live on the platforms. Or rather multiple representations of us do, swimming through a kind of voyeuristic soup. There's no real position I can grasp onto when everything's so slippery with meaning and meaninglessness. Try to be as cynical as possible about the work you make and see. For now that seems to be the only option.'
Bertie Brandes, co-founder and editor, *Mushpit*

'There's a place for every type of image as long as it's achieved responsibly.'
Alice Goddard, stylist and founder, *Hot and Cool*

'Erotica in photography can be beautiful and pleasurable, but I want the naked woman in the picture to want to be naked in the picture.'

'There is less nudity within the fashion sphere than there was. It is clear that the industry is now more focused on girls' personalities than their sexuality, and fashion brands and designers are now turning their content towards creating compelling stories that reveal the ethos and lifestyle of their brands. There is a wave of new, empowered women, such as Petra Collins and Tavi Gevinson, who are spearheading this change. They own their bodies; they are not afraid to voice their opinions and are refusing to be seen as stereotypes.'
Fanny Zakrisson, head of image, Premier Model Management

'Nudity and sexuality have always been a part of the vocabulary of visual arts, and it would be very sad if this became considered taboo. The recent scandals in the fashion industry have rightly shone a light on exploitation, and as creators, we need to actively preserve the rights of the models. It should be every person's own decision if she or he would like to contribute in such imagery, and it shouldn't be based on power games or serving higher interests. The industry is responsible for a new standard towards safeguarding, transparency and support. Nudity is a form of freedom and self-expression that can empower. We need to consider more closely the lens through which we create and view this type of imagery.'
Ali + Aniko, stylist duo, fashion directors, *Pleasure Garden Magazine*

'Sexualized imagery has always been a part of human history, not only in the fashion world. People have been portraying nudes since forever and with today's technology, there are even more ways to depict the human figure. I hope that nudity will be widely accepted in the future, too, and hopefully we will learn to love one another no matter what shapes, sizes and colours we encounter.'
Daniela Kocianova, model

'The human body is an incredible canvas for expressing ideas or feelings, and fashion is a powerful medium through which we paint that canvas. The types of stories we tell through fashion imagery and how we come to tell them has never been so important. We are starting to see a new generation of creatives who are changing the nature of fashion imagery, so I think the future holds a lot of potential for truly interesting explorations of the relationship between people and fashion. Now is the time for the whole industry and media to evolve.'
Rejina Pyo, designer

'It's so important that our current questioning and addressing of these issues transcends and endures beyond any passing trend or movement. I think nudity in fashion imagery should never be and never feel exploitative – it's just unacceptable. There are ethical ways to deal with complex subjects like nudity and sexuality in imagery without resorting to unethical behaviour, exploitation and misconduct. It comes down to empathy between all parties involved in the image-making process. It's the responsibility of all of us working in the industry to make sure this improves, to set better expectations and to keep each other safe.'
Katie Roberts-Wood, designer

'I think the discussion has been more about the exploitation of power, rather than the nudity itself. It's great that the issue has been brought to the surface, and we should all be sensitive

with the people we are working with (not that I haven't been!). But I don't see why this movement should limit creativity and I don't think this is about making the subject of nudity a taboo.'
Hanna Moon, photographer

'The body has been capitalized on as a sexual object to enhance the fantasy to consumers. Sex drive is an innate desire that should be explored through fashion imagery, because the form of the body and fashion design go hand in hand. It should be created and handled with freedom, precaution and responsibility, so that all parties are comfortable. There should be audits on shoots to begin implementing procedures and standards.'
A Sai Ta, designer

'My ultimate fear is that the current social climate around sexual harassment may have the potential to stifle sexually liberating imagery in the media. This is exactly the opposite of what we need to see in the world. While a great deal of the work I do as a designer is overtly sexual, it is entirely representative of younger queer individuals claiming their sexual identities, rather than being forced into hyper-erotic imagery that makes them a target for sexual abuse. I do think that change needs to happen in this industry in order for the veil to be lifted all the way. In terms of allegations specifically within the fashion industry, we have only seen the tip of the iceberg. But rather than taking sexuality out of fashion imagery, I feel it is up to a younger generation of liberated individuals to create an image of sexual identity that is empowering instead of endangering.'
Neil Grotzinger, designer

'I think we're talking about power politics and bad practice perpetuated by systemic gender inequality, rather than sex or nudity. That's why the conversation about #MeToo extends so far. It's a cultural problem. And it's a problem in which the balance is tipped towards men. But this has prompted people with commissioning power to evaluate their positions. So I hope that what we'll see is the amplification of female voices and a more level playing field. Perhaps we'll shift into the age of the female gaze after decades of being made to see fashion through a male lens. And that might allow for nuance in our interpretations of nude images. Because nudity doesn't have to be about sex. More diversity in our industry might make that more explicit.'
Sara McAlpine, fashion features editor, *Elle*

'Our society is dominated by the objectification of women, and the fashion industry has unfortunately played a part in it, despite the fact that the audience and the target customers of fashion brands and media are more often than not female themselves. Those in authority and in control of how women are portrayed in fashion, like creative directors, photographers, editors, marketing executives, often see women with the male gaze, and intentionally or not, perpetuate and enable the sexualization of women. As this phenomenon continues to prevail in mainstream fashion, despite the recent allegations, it is more important than ever for the younger generation of female creators such as myself to use our voices and shift the narrative on women's roles in today's fashion industry and society at large.'
Andrea Jiapei Li, designer

'I don't think wearing massive dungarees or dressing like a man or making yourself an asexual being is the answer.'

'Why have young women been portrayed by old men for so long? I think there is a very clear connection between all of the abuse coming to light and the old-fashioned system of misogyny in image-making. I am excited about ushering in a new era of photography in which women are no longer boxed into the male gaze, but are in control of representing their own body and sexuality with freedom and autonomy.'
Clara Balzary, photographer

'Nudity is not the problem as such – there is a lot of nude imagery that is empowering to the subject and others. Let's not forget that a lot of people have fought to be able to pose naked or express their sensuality without being perceived in a certain way for a long time. We don't want to go back in time or allow this to become a conversation focusing on conservative views. This conversation has to be about respect and a fight against the misuse of power.'
Nell Kalonji, fashion editor, *AnOther*

'As women in the industry we've lived through a patriarchy, and therefore have a deeper understanding of what it feels like

to be the object of the male gaze. We have to delve into the meaning and semantics of an image even more than before; it is simply our imperative, our duty. Why is this teenage girl topless when we're trying to sell clothes? Why is this male art director dictating the terms of exchange? Does this child feel comfortable, and how can we ensure the safety of models in this hierarchical structure within which fashion exists? Making images is inherently intimate but we have to ensure those intimacies don't cross the line and art doesn't become the excuse for predatory or abusive behaviour.'
Charlotte Roberts, co-founder, *Mushpit*

'If we have the power to make people feel something through an image, then what is it that we want people to feel? I personally feel inspired to create images that are not only timeless and emotional, but also soft and don't trigger a sense of negativity or sexuality for the sake of it. I find the movement of female photography right now to be quite powerful. The voice women are able to have in this industry is now being seen and heard differently. Because of that, I think there should be a sense of freedom in the way we as women want to express ourselves, as men have always had that freedom to an extent in fashion. I think imagery will shift now that women are the ones taking the pictures.'
Bibi Borthwick, photographer

'We need to do everything in our power to protect vulnerable people from sexual harassment. It's clear that things have needed to change and it's brilliant that they are. As to how it affects the imagery we're all creating, we need to be very careful. As a society, we've never been more body conscious. Notions of identity are changing, and photography is at the front of this debate. It's important that while we moderate the processes and productions much better, we don't stifle photographers.'
Tom Johnson, photographer

'In the history of art and fashion, there is a long tradition of nudity centred around ideals of beauty, sexuality, and the celebration and politicization of the body. I think that these issues coming to light within a climate that allows them to be addressed does not necessarily mean that there is no place for the future creation of these images. Rather it can and should act as the impetus for the responsible and positive creation of these images moving forward. I think that this absolutely entails restrictions on age in terms of how young people are photographed, a diversity of representation, and a transparency in terms of usage across the board. Most importantly however, I believe it is about the respectful treatment of all involved.'
Matthew Adams Dolan, designer

'It comes down to empowerment over objectification. The nature of nude or even sexual imagery is not the issue here. It is the power structures within the industry that enable harassment, mistreatment and objectification, gender roles and stereotypes that are no longer relevant in imagery. There is an undeniable shift happening. People want to see equal representation, respect and empowerment for everyone in fashion. As fashion professionals, we need to consider how to produce imagery that achieves this and responds to changing ideas surrounding gender, sexuality and nudity. It's also important to recognize that images depicting nudity do not need to be sexualized, but can be rather a celebration of connection, form and beauty.'
Tom Van Dorpe, fashion editor, *V Magazine* and *V Man*

'I think that the revelation of these stories and issues creates more opportunity in the future for image-making like this to be practised with a greater awareness and respect to the people involved. Hopefully shining a light on these aspects can only lead to a better and more sensitive practices.'
Phoebe English, designer

'In a world where far-right politics are gaining momentum, I think it's important not to adopt an increasingly conservative approach to both nudity and sexuality. Anti-abortion campaigns in the USA are making headway, supporting politicians who change legislation to make it harder for women to be in control of their own lives. Equally, in Poland, women are fighting for their rights. In this age where sexualized imagery to sell products is rife, including to women themselves, let's not try to control it, but instead champion nude imagery that celebrates the female form (and the other 112 genders now identified in 2018, according to Google) without showing it in a sexual context. I think the suggestion of nudity (like an ankle in Victorian days) is more provocative in a visual world where nudity is gratuitous.'
Madeleine Østlie, casting director and founder, AAMO

'Talking about nudity is so complex and ambiguous. When is nakedness a symbol of vulnerability? When is it inevitably sexual? And when is it a sign of innocence and freedom? I don't think there's a one-size-fits-all solution. Women's bodies seem to cause debate whenever and however they are revealed inside and outside of fashion. Perhaps rather than talking about nudity, we should refocus the conversation on the intention and process behind the images that we create. To some extent the whole world has become victim to a certain level of desensitization with regard to our actions and their impact on others, including animals and the environment. So in that sense I think it is very important for those of us working in the creative industry to set an example, find ways how we can shape a positive evolution via the images we produce, and by re-evaluating the way we treat each other and any living thing in the process.'
Lena C. Emery, photographer

'I am very excited about the shift that we have seen happening over the past few years and which doesn't seem to be slowing down. The allure of sex and the nude is as old as time, but it has been dominated by the male gaze and we are seeing now a questioning of notions around the representation of femininity, the female form and the role of women in society.

Where previously there has been objectification and simplification, we now see women in decision-making roles and as image-makers changing and challenging that narrative. They are creating art, imagery, designs and products that are by women for women, and in the long term this will create a more balanced and multifaceted output, environment and society. Overall, this is a really exciting time for creatives, because they have the opportunity to explore the human psyche in a modern and changing world, and to communicate what that world will look like. I believe it will really crystallize great art and image-making and separate it from the mediocre as creators continue to work harder to understand and represent this brave new world through their work.'
Charlotte Rey, editor and co-founder, Campbell-Rey

'The naked female form is beautiful and should be celebrated and I do feel nudity in fashion can exist, but that paradigm has indeed shifted. For too long, women have been used as a voyeuristic prop for the desire of males and we must see this end. This, along with many males who came out to tell their stories, symbolizes how it should crucially be the choice of the model. Their image should most definitely be in good taste and not for frivolity and fetishization of the subject.'
Lynette Nylander, writer, editor and creative consultant

'My first memory of making a judgement of my own appearance according to society's norm and gender appeal was telling my mother that I didn't like my passport photo at the age of five. I wore a high-ruffled collar shirt and I had a short bob haircut. I longed for wavy long hair and I asked my mother when could I start wearing spaghetti-strap dresses. I think all images in the fashion world have been sexualized throughout history. Of course, then I grew up and found different complexities behind girls being objectified, and conversely, girls sexualizing their own image. My wish is that over time girls would learn to have the courage and dignity to see their own beauty. Flaunt it if you got it, but only by your own consent and liberty.'
Anaïs Jourden, designer

'When is nakedness a symbol of vulnerability? When is it inevitably sexual? And when is it a sign of innocence and freedom?'

www.chaos.club

The showtime questionnaire: Jean Paul Gaultier

By Loïc Prigent

What's your favourite show of this year?
My *Fashion Freak Show* – 'Le freak, c'est chic'.

I hope there's a teddy bear in your show. Has the teddy-bear casting already happened?
Yes, the teddy bears have been chosen. There were a lot of applicants; it was very hard to decide, but the only real star is Nana Mouskouri.

What are the main qualities needed for this fundamental role?
The ability to wear conical breasts and glasses.

What's the best city to party in?
Arcueil. Just kidding. Les Folies Bergère in Paris.

How do you remain anonymous at a party?
I don't go.

Fabric has a direction, but does life?
Just like fabric, life can be straight or cut on the bias.

Who has the right to say no to you?
My conscience.

Who do you always say yes to?
Life!

Your life has already been portrayed in a photo story. Has anyone offered to make it into a film?
Are you ready to do it?

Who would play you, aged 20, working at Pierre Cardin?
Eddy de Pretto, and I was 18, not 20.

What are you most addicted to?
Work.

What's your drag name?
Dolly Prane.

Who is the surprise finale model you still dream of having?
Queen Elizabeth II.

What's your favourite show of your whole career?
The first one.

What's your favourite dessert?
My boyfriend's banana cake.

Which is your favourite sin?
I love them all.

Why is Paris still the capital of fashion?
Paris is fashion because fashion is Paris.

Portrait by Gorka Postigo

givenchy.com

Documented by Steven Meisel

GIVENCHY

SERIES 8

LOUIS VUITTON